WHY?

OR

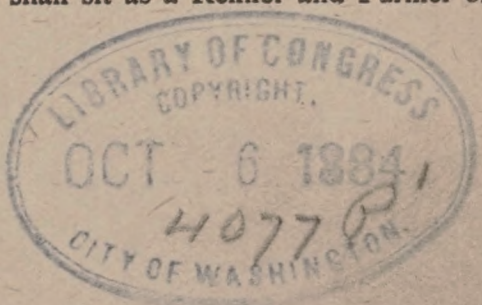
TRIED IN THE CRUCIBLE.

BY

D. S. S.

"He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver."

—*Malachi 3:3.*



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PREFACE

WE go into a laboratory to see the process of purifying gold and silver. The metal is put into the crucible, and that in turn into the heating furnace; then the chemist sits watching the dissolving metal until it becomes a sparkling fluid, so pure that it reflects his face. Then he knows that it is refined from its dross, and removes it immediately from the furnace.

Again, we visit the artificer, setting jewels, the most precious gems of which are wrought out of dim, unlovely stones. They sparkle with a wonderful brilliancy now; but they were made beautiful by a long, refining process of heating and polishing.

If all this is necessary in preparing jewels for earthly diadems, shall we "think it strange" if those intended for Heaven's King must often pass through His crucible?

The following pages unfold some glimpses of this refining process in human life. They tell the story of real life and experiences. The scenes, the most severe and trying, are true to the facts.

The desire in writing has been to honor the Heavenly Refiner, as a tender, unfailing Friend, in the keenest pangs of His refining crucible.

If He will accept this work in His service, and permit it to win some heart to find rest in His abiding presence, we shall rejoice and give Him all praise.

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God."—*Zech. 13:9.*

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—*Mal. 3:17.*

D. S. S.

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"WHY?"

I.

Mother and Son.

"Tired hands are folded, never more to weary,
And eyes are closed that never more can weep."

ROBBIE! My son!"

"Yes, mother; I'm here."

And a young lad hastened from another room.

"Oh, what is it, mother dear; are you very tired, or faint? Let me give you some of this new medicine, I have just brought for you. It will make you stronger. There, now, let me soothe you into sleep."

"But, Robbie"—

"Please don't talk now. Wait till you have rested awhile."

"My darling—son—I must talk now. Oh! I have waited—too—long—already! My Father in

Heaven—Oh, spare—my breath, a little—longer! Robbie—my precious son—I want—to tell you—again, what a comfort you have always—been to your mother! God—will surely bless you, for being—so true—so loving a son! And, Robbie—I want—you should give me—that promise again! Quick, my—darling—make me that promise once more! Once more—before I must leave you."

"I do promise you, dearest mother! I will do all things as you wish. But don't speak of leaving me! You will not die! You must not die! I cannot have it so! This new medicine will make you stronger. Oh! mother, you will not die!"

"There, there, Robbie—don't grieve now. You have been my brave son always. Try to be brave now—and help me—in this struggle. There—take my hand—and listen to me, a few moments. Then I will go—to sleep. My noble—precious son! We have suffered—much together. The time is coming when you will be all—alone—and suffering. This will lead you—to go—to God. He will comfort—and help you. It is sad—so sad—that I dare not have you remain—in the care—of your—own father! But your life—must not be ruined—as he has ruined—his own life! Robbie—in that box—is a letter directed to Doctor Harland—of Weston. When I am taken—

away from you—I want you—to go immediately, and take that letter to Doctor Harland. He was my friend—once. I think he will be a friend to you. My darling son—do you understand—that you must—go away—just as soon as I am gone? And you must not allow your father to know—that you—are going—nor where you have gone. If he knew, he would compel you to remain with him—and work—in that saloon—to pay the keeper for his whiskey. And the laws—of our country—would uphold him—in doing so. Your father—will be angry—in thus being defeated—about his plan for you. But you must be taken from his—control now. When you become a man—then—be a true son to your misguided—father. Oh!—could he only be restored—to his—rightful manhood—and become prepared—for the—better life—in Heaven! My poor—unfortunate husband! My still loved one! Father in Heaven—may he—not yet be saved? Robbie—darling—don't you fail to meet—me, in Heaven! We—will sing—again together—there! Robbie—precious son—come closer—to me. There—hold—my hand—closer. I am—so tired—I must rest! Robbie—try—to save—your father. Remember—your promise. You—will—not—forget—your—promise. Trust—in God—and—we—shall—meet—again."

The voice of the mother had been growing weaker, and her closing words were in a low, faint whisper, as, apparently, she sank into a deep sleep.

The son still remained by her side, holding one of her hands within his own, while he gave to it a soothing caress, with which he had often lulled his mother into a needed rest.

This scene was one that could but touch the heart of any beholder. A loving young son, alone with his dying mother! And both of them far from earthly friends. There was, indeed, a husband and father; but he was that most inefficient of all friends and helpers—a slave to intoxicating drink; and at this very time was a miserable lounger at a low saloon in the village. But Henry Fenton had not always been like this. Once, no young man walked with a step more firm and proud. And no one could have any fairer prospects in life. When he won for his wife the petted daughter of a loving home, he seemed altogether worthy of his lovely bride. But, in reality, he had no decided principles. And without decision of character, he soon yielded to the temptations that assailed him in certain circles of social life. All too soon, the glass of wine and brandy was the accompaniment of his daily life. This was the *cause* that destroyed the peace and

fair hopes of his home, drew him away from and ruined a flourishing business. And then, down, step by step, it led him from luxury and every comfort, to deep poverty and suffering.

This gentle, loving wife clung to him through it all, ever hoping to win him back to virtue and happiness. But he would not heed her entreaties or her prayers, and for years rushed madly on, dragging wife and children into scenes so sadly humiliating as only the family of the drunkard can realize.

For some time previous to the opening of our story, the only care that Henry Fenton had taken of his family, had been to remove them as far away as possible from all who had known them in happier years, and hide them among strangers. And he had succeeded too well in keeping them from the knowledge of those friends who would have protected and comforted them.

What suffering years these had been to his wife! To her they had been a purifying crucible, intensely heated! But her refining was now accomplished. No one could look into her sweet, pale face, without knowing that through the Divine Refiner, she had even now attained this promised peace.

But Mrs. Fenton had never been a strong woman; and suffering and hardship had at last

exhausted her whole being. Of her four children only one was now living. Robert was a manly boy of fourteen. Naturally he was of a happy, hopeful temperament. But his childhood was made bitter by the taunting of rude boys that his father was a drunkard. As he became older, the knowledge that this was true, had depressed his buoyant young spirit, making him too grave and thoughtful for his years. This feeling was that a cruel wrong had been done to him, in his father being such a man. Other boys had fathers they could respect and love. His own father was a low drunkard! The shame of this had stung the sensitive nature of Robbie Fenton almost beyond endurance. And then the hardships and sufferings of his mother! All of the slumbering manhood in his boy-heart was aroused, as he saw how she was being crushed by his father's unkindness. He longed inexpressibly, to spring at once into maturity of strength, so that he could protect his mother. But already he had been doing for her comfort all that was possible. Before he was eight years old, he found ways to earn money for his mother. It was upon his young arm that his mother depended for every supply, since her own health had failed, and especially since the family moved to their last poor home in Marlow.

There had long been a close and tender sympathy between Mrs. Fenton and her son. Their mutual trial with the husband and father, had led them into a free unfolding of thought and feeling. Robbie went to his mother with all of his heart-life. And she had permitted her son to learn much about her own. But since she had become conscious that her life must soon close, she had avoided any talk about herself. She knew how he would grieve at any hint that she was seriously ill. He would suffer so much when he learned the truth; and for the present he must be spared the knowledge. But she had been trying to prepare his mind for any trial or event that might be coming to him. In the past weeks she had talked to him much about the joy, the brightness, the rest of Heaven. Many times she had said, —

"Dear Robbie, it is so very beautiful, and so peaceful up there, — in our Heavenly Father's many mansions, — that we must not grieve too much when any one we love, is removed to that home. Remember this, my precious son."

And then the mother had given many and minute directions for the best interests of her boy in the coming years. Her husband had made an effort to place Robbie as errand-boy in the saloon, and thus be sure of obtaining his own

liquor through the labor of his son. The mother had shielded Robbie from this until now; and she had received his promise never to accept such employment. But she knew only too well, that when she was gone, Robbie would be in his father's power, and wholly for evil. She had a plan to prevent this. But some things she had deferred saying to Robbie until that strange faintness came suddenly upon her, and she called him to her bedside.

But in all of this Robbie had received no warning of the truth as to his mother's illness. He thought it was because his mother loved him so much, that she was anxious about his best interests, and gave him so many directions as to living rightly in the future, and it was only because she loved God that she talked of Heaven. Robbie had so long been familiar with his mother's pale face and slow, feeble step, that he was not alarmed when she had to rest all day upon the bed; for he said, as he hurried home with that new medicine, "This tonic will do her good; the doctor told me it would. I shall be able to earn more money soon, and then I will get everything she needs to make her strong. All she needs now to make her well is to have better food. And she shall have it, if I have to work every night till morning!"

These thoughts filled Robbie's mind, as he still sat by his mother. As soon as she seemed asleep, he gently laid her hand from his own down by her side. But he remained perfectly quiet, so that her resting might not be disturbed. He was glad to see her sleeping so softly, for this quiet rest would do her so much good. And now a smile was coming, as if some happy dream was given to her.

The face now lying so very still upon the pillow, was thin and pale, yet it was a very lovely face. There was, indeed, upon it the impress of suffering, but it was passing away; for a strangely sweet smile now illuminated every feature of the face that Robbie Fenton loved as few sons love their mother! Just then Mrs. Upton came into the room. This lady was the only person who had called at this lowly home of strangers; and it was through Robbie's influence that she had done so. As he was doing some work for her, won by her kind manner, he invited her to call and see his sick mother. Mrs. Upton did so, and becoming interested in both the mother and son, often afterward came to give them such aid as she could. Now she stood in silent astonishment, as she saw that patient, motionless boy sitting by the side of his dead mother! In a moment she went to him, and in a hushed voice, said, —

"Dear child! are you not tired? Let me take your place, and you go away awhile."

"Thank you, Mrs. Upton, but mother has been resting for some time. She will awaken soon now, and I must be here, beside her, then. She was talking when she went to sleep. I want to ask her about something as soon as she wakes up."

"Dear Robbie, your mother sleeps well now. She will sleep longer. Will you not leave her for a little while, and take a message to my daughter for me? I will do for your mother all she needs."

It did not in any way accord with Robbie's wishes to leave his mother, just now. He felt unusually anxious to watch by her, in this quiet sleep, and be with her in her first waking moment. Somehow, he had an intensely strong desire to meet her loving look, as she would open her eyes upon him after this resting. But he could not refuse Mrs. Upton's request, and told her he would go. Then she wrote a hasty note to her daughter:—

"You must contrive to keep Robbie Fenton at our house for awhile. His mother is dead, but the poor boy thinks she is only sleeping. Indeed, she looks as if in a sweet sleep. Don't tell Robbie—he is almost

exhausted, and must rest awhile before he knows the truth. Take him into the parlor; ask him to rest upon the lounge, and leave him alone. Send Frank to Mrs. White's, and ask her to come to Mrs. Fenton's at once."

This note was given into Robbie's hand, as Mrs. Upton said, "Will you take that to my daughter? And will you remain at my house awhile? I certainly will take all needed care of your mother."

Robbie felt bewildered by this. And was still more so when Marie Upton brought to him a cup of tea, and told him he better lie down and rest himself. He had no intention of remaining long, and certainly not of going to sleep. But the effects of the nervine tea, together with his great weariness, soon made him unconscious of all things in a profound slumber. This rest of two hours was a needed one, to prepare him to meet the shock that awaited his return to his mother.

II.

Motherless.

"Oh! there is never sorrow of heart
That shall lack a timely help,
If but to God we turn, and ask
Of Him, to be our friend."

— *Wordsworth.*

IT was the evening after the funeral of Mrs. Fenton. Her husband had reeled about her open grave in drunken insensibility, while stranger hands laid her down to earth's last, low resting-place.

Now, he was in his own room, in the heavy stupor of intoxication.

Mrs. Upton and Robbie were alone, in the dimly lighted sitting-room. This lady had assumed the responsibility of attending to the home, and all of the needed preparations, during these sad days. She was inclined to think that Robbie was not feeling the death of his mother very much, certainly not so much as she had expected he would.

Mrs. Upton was a kind woman, but she judged now, as many people do,—that if one in trouble does not weep very much, there cannot be much sorrow in the heart. And so Mrs. Upton decided that Robbie Fenton was not suffering much in his bereavement. He had indeed been strangely quiet, from the moment he knew that his mother was dead.

He returned from Mrs. Upton's house with a buoyant step, for his sleep had refreshed him; and he expected to find his mother better for her long rest. He was unusually impatient to meet her loving greeting again. So he asked no question, but hurried to her room. He found her still lying upon her bed—her eyes closed—and that pleasant smile still upon her face. But she was dressed for her coffin. In a moment Robbie understood it all. He sank upon his knees, and for a long, long time his face was hidden upon his mother's pillow. But there were no words,—no tears, nor moaning, then,—nor when they carried his mother out for the last time. Those who knew what a devoted, loving son he had been to his mother, wondered much as they noted his calm appearance, his tearless eyes. Why could they not see that there was a deeper suffering, because of the tearless eye and the quiet demeanor? Those who have never suffered keenly

do not understand this, and so, they often misjudge.

Good Mrs. Upton was perplexed about Robbie, as they sat silently together, late into the night. Her motherly heart compelled her to linger. But what could she do for him now? He had not spoken a word all day. He was sitting now by his mother's low rocker, with his head laid upon one of its arms, and his face hidden within his hands.

Mrs. Upton began to feel that she must return to her own home. But she could not go away and leave this boy so. She went now nearer to him, laid her hand upon his shoulder, and said kindly, —

"Robbie, you'd better go to bed. You are tired, and it is very late."

The boy started up then.

"To bed? Oh, no! I cannot do that!"

And then, as if his young and troubled spirit could no longer be silent, he exclaimed:—

"Why does God let so much misery be in this world? If He is so good, why does He let people suffer so?"

"Don't you believe that God is good, Robbie?"

"Why—I don't know what to believe. My mother was always saying 'God is good,' but I don't see how He is good to me. It has been

sad in our home ever since I can remember, because — well, my father would drink so. And now, God has taken away from me my only friend, — my precious mother! I need her; why did God let her die? I cannot bear it! Oh, my mother! my precious mother!"

Now was unsealed the pent-up sorrow of a deeply suffering young heart. And again Robbie bowed his head upon the arm of his mother's low rocker, and wept without restraint. Tears of a sacred grief can never dishonor the strongest manhood; and Robert Fenton never blushed as he recalled this scene; but in after years it remained in his memory, as a casket from which there sprang a responsive sympathy in the sorrows of others, and a tender patience with woman's tears.

From this night, too, Robert Fenton dated the time when he first really prayed to God. From childhood, and by his mother's side, he had offered many prayers. But never, until this night, had he prayed to a real, living God in Heaven. This night was all so dark with a bitter grief, — and his young spirit so alone, — he seemed compelled to look away to that bright world where his mother had gone, and to cry with a strong pleading to the God he loved to help him. Robert Fenton was to be made an instrument,

in God's hand, of blessing to others; and the preparation had now begun. The Divine Refiner placed the loving young soul in a crucible that would purify, expand, and lift it nearer to Himself.

The bitter sobbing ceased as Robbie began to think of God as a Father to whom he was permitted to go for help. So he asked that all his wrong words to-night, and all his sins, might be forgiven, and that God would help him to love and trust Him as his own Friend. And the answer came soon. Even now there comes to Robbie the feeling that God forgives him, and receives him as His own child. Now, he feels stronger in spirit, and his sorrow is soothed. And then, it comforts him to think that his lovely mother is now resting in Heaven, beyond all suffering and sorrow; and, with the help of God, he would find her there sometime.

But, at length, Robbie remembered that there was something he must do at once, as his mother's words came back to him.

He must go away from Marlow before morning.

His tears flowed afresh, as he thought of his mother's solicitude for him, and how she gave her last strength in directing him what to do. But this very remembrance now nerved him up to act

with necessary promptness. Rising from his chair, he turned to Mrs. Upton, and said, —

"Please pardon all of my hasty words to-night. I think God has forgiven me. I thank you very much for all of your kindness to my dear mother and myself in our trouble. I can never forget what you have done for us. Sometime I will try to make some return. I am going away from Marlow to-night. If I remain here until morning my father will detain me, and compel me to work in that saloon to pay for his whiskey. He must not know where I am; and I cannot tell you now where I am going. All that I now can tell you is this, — that I am going to see an old friend of my mother's. But, sometime, you shall hear from me. May I ask if you will see a little to my poor father, — you, and the other neighbors? You shall all be rewarded as soon as possible. I must not detain you any longer from your home. Please let me bid you good-night and good-bye."

Was this the same young lad that was so crushed with sorrow just now? Mrs. Upton did not at this moment remember how Robbie Fenton, in being his mother's only reliance, had learned to be self-reliant. And then she knew nothing of the strength and comforting that had come to him from God. But she prom-

ised to remember him and his request about his father, and left him with a kind good-bye.

Robbie was glad to be alone a little while in the place that had been home, with his mother. Now, he went through all the rooms, so full of loving memories of that precious mother. Again he knelt by the bedside where he had that last talk with her. Once more he had a time of strong crying to God in prayer. And again soothing and strength were given to him from the Divine Comforter.

Now Robbie gathered some of his mother's most valued treasures, — such small articles as he could carry with him, including her pocket Bible, — and he was ready to go. But he must look at his poor father again. He went to his room. There he lay, — a once noble man, ruined by strong drink. How Robbie Fenton would have loved his father! How he pitied him, notwithstanding all the misery he had brought upon his family and himself. Even now, Robbie would not leave him if it could do any good to remain, and if he had not promised his mother to go.

When the early stage came through Marlow, Robbie, with his small trunk, was waiting by the roadside, and soon Marlow was left far behind. At the close of the next day, the lumbering old

coach rolled into the village of Weston, and Robbie Fenton was left at the office-door of Doctor Harland. The sensitive shrinking from strangers that his father's drinking habits had early caused Robbie to experience, was rushing over him, but, without yielding a moment to the feeling, he entered the office and asked for Doctor Harland. A gentleman came forward, saying, "I am the doctor," and received the letter the boy gave to him.

"It is from my mother, sir. She is not living. Before she died she asked me to bring that letter to you."

The doctor opened the letter, and read:—

"Will Doctor Harland receive the son of her who was Mary Alden, and give to him the protection he needs from his own misguided father? Not for her own sake, nor for any memory of past days, does his mother ask this of you. But in the name only of Him who has special promises for the orphan, and because I believe you worthy of trust, I ask you,—in this my dying hour,—to be a friend to my precious son, Robbie.

"MARY FENTON."

Perhaps Doctor Harland would have repelled any suggestion made in advance to receive into his own care the son of Mary Alden,—the

woman who, in her happy girlhood, so decidedly refused to become his wife. Could he refuse this appeal, now that her motherless boy stood before him? We shall see.

It was difficult, perhaps, for the doctor to read the trembling lines, traced by a hand growing cold in death. Or, it might be that his memory was too deeply stirred. Whatever the cause, the doctor was a long time reading the few lines, or in pondering over their suggestions. At last he laid down the mother's letter, and turned to look again at her son. Robbie had walked to the window, and now stood looking up to the hills beyond the village. There was a very sorrowful expression in those young eyes. But they were like his mother's eyes; and the mouth was like hers, too,—refined, sensitive. Yes! this boy was truly Mary Alden's son!

What a rush of memories came back to the strong-nerved, serene doctor, of a time when he would have sacrificed all else if he could have won Mary Alden for his wife! And would he now refuse to be a friend to her son? No! His views of Christian duty would prevent him from refusing such an appeal. And then, his own home was a childless one. He had for years been desiring a son of his own. Now, he would take this boy into his care, and if he proved

to be worthy, he should be as an own son to him.

"Robbie!"

The boy started, almost in alarm, as he heard the familiar pet name.

"In this letter your mother calls you Robbie; may I not call you so? Your mother asks me to be a friend to you. I will be that, and more, if you prove to be true. I have no son,—no child. Will you be a son to me?"

Doctor Harland was a dark, stern-looking man; but his friends and patients, who knew him best, trusted him without a fear. And as Robbie Fenton now looked into those keen, but kindly eyes, he felt sure that he could trust and love such a man as his father. So he gave his hand to Doctor Harland, as he said,—

"I will try to be all you wish, sir."

"It is a covenant, then, between us. And I think neither of us will be sorry for it."

And then, with something like the alacrity of his young days, the doctor took Robbie to his wife.

"He is to be our son, Annis,—your son, and mine. It will do us all good, I hope."

Doctor Harland did not confine his professional attentions to the body only; but included in his diagnoses the mental and spiritual needs of his

patients. One of his pet theories was that no home could long retain its healthy elements without the presence of young life. The laugh, and glee, and clinging love of children were needed in all homes. His own home, and his delicate lady wife, were no exceptions. He was thinking of his wife when he decided to receive Robbie into his family. But Mrs. Harland had lived exclusively for herself too long. She never gave to Robbie anything more than a place in her home: never one in her heart. This did not matter so much to him, as his own mother was always enshrined in his loving memory.

But in Doctor Harland, Robbie found a true friend, who gave to him a father's love and care.

III.

Stepping into Manhood.

"Like the swell of some sweet tune,
Morning rises into noon,
May glides onward into June."

—*Longfellow.*

EIGHT years have carried Robert Fenton into maturing, young manhood. He was a son for any father to be proud of, and Doctor Harland was a proud and happy father. As he watched the unfolding of a noble, Christian man in his adopted son, he rejoiced in the Providence that gave into his own home-care, the son of his early friend, Mary Alden.

Robert has been three years at Yale. In one year more he will enter upon professional life. Doctor Harland is hoping that Robert may choose to be a physician, and remain with him. The doctor even now allows himself to indulge in some day-dreams, of the rest and comfort that will come to him when he can intrust some of his duties to that strong, young hand and true heart.

The earthly path of Robert Fenton is indeed opening pleasantly. The memory of his mother is still fondly cherished. But his early life seems like a sad dream. Henry Fenton never knew where his son was. But Doctor Harland had some communications with Mrs. Upton, and secured for the unhappy man all those attentions that were needed. His father's death recalled the bitter trials in Marlow. But that was five years ago.

Now, life to Robert was full of the sunshine of success, of gladness, and of love! For he was not only strong to win the race among his compeers in literary attainments, ranking high in college honors, but a new joy crowned his life. His retiring disposition, and his student life, had prevented Robert from making many acquaintances. And it was not until his last year's vacation, that he had mingled in any of the social gatherings in Weston. At that time he went with some young people to a picnic in Deacon Dudley's grove. While he stood watching the different groups of merry young people, one face suddenly arrested his attention; it was that of a fair, young girl, in whose features and smile there was a strong resemblance to his mother. Robert was startled, and in the loving memories of his mother, that thronged upon him, he forgot

himself, until he was made aware that the lady noticed and was annoyed by his prolonged looking at her. He then sought for an introduction, and apologized for his seeming impertinence by telling her why his gaze was so irresistibly drawn to her face. This was the beginning of a friendship between them. The wonderful resemblance to his mother first attracted Robert, but it was herself that won his love. And Robert Fenton loved as only the best of men can love.

Love! How many good people start at the word as something not to be spoken or thought of! And too few, even of most worthy men and women, ever understand its truest meaning. It is not mere sentiment. It is not passion. These are only fancies of an hour. But love is as deathless as God Himself, — for He is its centre, — the Fountain from which it flows. Love is the element of Heaven, and pervades all that is best upon earth. True love is pure and unselfish. It was something of a love like this that Robert gave to Emma Dudley. And she had promised to become his wife. What more could earth give to him of its best happiness?

It is now the third year of Robert's college life. He has passed unscathed through the varied temptations that beset young men. He is one of the first in his class. The professors honor

and trust him; and his fellow-students can but respect him. Nevertheless, his uprightness does not suit some of his class-mates. It irritates them that they can never see him ignoring the college rules, and never persuade him to join with them in convivial scenes, or gain his aid to smuggle liquors into the students' dormitories.

"You will have to excuse me, gentlemen, from all that kind of business. I have never tasted of any intoxicating drink: I never shall. And if I wished to use stimulants I surely would not bring it here, against the regulations of the college."

"Ah, ha!" they said among themselves; "you set yourself up as so much better than we are, do you, Miss Nancy, with your prim ways and sanctimonious words?"

"I tell you what, boys!" said one, who took the lead in frolics; "let us give Fenton a hazing if he is a senior. We will compel him to drink some of our choice brandy. Won't it be rare fun if Fenton is absent from class recitation some morning with a drunken headache?"

The speaker was a young man with a pleasant face and a commanding person. Out in society he was known only as a man of wealth and talent. But he was sadly lacking in every right principle, and was the acknowledged leader in the college

carousals. George Heyward had felt more irritated than he allowed his chums to know of, at the unyielding rectitude of Robert Fenton. Jealousy had something to do in this; for Heyward knew that Fenton not only stood upon a higher moral platform, but also as a scholar Fenton occupied a high position, that might have been his own had he made the needed effort. Now, under the guise of a frolic, he was planning to humble Fenton before the college and the world. His associates would have left this all to Heyward, as they felt no ill-will towards Fenton. But they were compelled to give Heyward their co-operation by his commanding will.

When their arrangements were completed, they went together, — some half a dozen young men, — to make Fenton an evening call at his room. He was busy with his books, but received them with a pleasant welcome. After a few moments of general conversation, Heyward arose, and with a quick step, went to Fenton's side. Throwing his arms about Fenton in a manner to give to himself every advantage, he at the same time called out, —

"Bring it along!"

But Fenton was not unprepared. He knew that he was no favorite with Heyward, and had never been deceived by any of his blandishments

toward himself. As the party came into his room to-night he noticed a peculiar glitter in the eyes of Heyward; and he had been watching them all. He saw a bottle and a glass pulled from a pocket at the call of the leader. But before Heyward could tighten his arm about the neck of his intended victim, Fenton was upon his feet, confronting them. And there came a look into his eyes that for a moment quailed them.

"Stand off! Don't bring that stuff to me!" he said.

"It is useless for you to refuse now," said Heyward. "We bought this for you, and intend to compel you to drink it. You may now as well do it quietly."

And he pressed the glass of brandy into the hand of Fenton. The glass was taken, for Fenton had a use for it. And then, in a tone that made them pause again, he exclaimed, —

"Do you claim to be gentlemen, and come here to commit this outrage? Intend to compel me to drink that liquid fire, do you? I assure you that it will never be done!"

"Ah, ha! Never be done!" laughed Heyward mockingly, as he again sprang at Fenton, telling the others to hold him.

At that moment the glass of brandy flew from Fenton's hand, — whirled across the room, —

crashed through the window, and fell upon the pavement below.

This was an unexpected part of the "hazing." If the noise down there aroused the college authorities, there would be some investigation. If all the facts were known the results might be serious to Heyward and his associates. Would Fenton divulge the facts? Heyward was not quite sure. But with his usual self-complaisance he thought he could smooth it all over by saying, —

"Well, never mind, Fenton; it's only a frolic. Give us your hand and let it pass."

Fenton did not give his hand. But he said, gravely, —

"I have sufficient reasons for discarding forever all intoxicating drinks. I shall retain no ill will towards any of you. I only wish you would all choose to walk in the safe path of moral rectitude. George Heyward! you should be one of God's noblemen."

Heyward and his party were too much sobered by fear of consequences to reply, and left the room in silence. There were inquiries made as to the cause of the disturbance, but nothing was elicited. The janitor repaired the window, and Fenton paid the expense. College life was more quiet after this. Robert Fenton and George

Heyward had only a distant bow for each other when they met. And both of them long remembered this episode of their college days. Heyward could not soon forget the unexpected arousing of the quiet, religious student he had thought to overpower so easily. Nor were those words forgotten,—"You should be one of God's noblemen." But the memory only served to irritate him.

And from this night there were some new thoughts revolving in the mind of Robert Fenton, as he saw so many young men rushing into the same dark way in which his own father went to ruin. And as there came to him a vision of the thousands of families suffering as his own had suffered, through his father's degradation, a low voice seemed calling upon him to do something for them. But what? And how should it be done?

IV.

In the Refining Crucible.

"The finest gold in which is greatest worth,
Was only made through fiery ordeals bright."

THE college commencement came again, and closed with honor to Robert Fenton, and to the satisfaction of Doctor Harland. They returned to Weston together. But Robert remained at home but a short time. Somehow, there was a restlessness upon him, unusual for him. Was it only the reaction from the excitement of those last days at Yale? He could not tell. But he certainly was mystified in regard to Emma Dudley. Since their engagement there had been a constant and frank interchange of letters between them, until recently. For a year Emma had been away from Weston, attending school. And for the last three months Robert had received scarce a line from her. "It must be the pressure of her studies," thought her unsuspicious lover. And he was glad to remember that this was her last

term at school; and the long absence would be at an end.

Robert had at last decided to become a physician and remain with his friend, Doctor Harland. And now he allowed himself to indulge in the near prospect of having a home of his own, with Emma as his wife. Yet, notwithstanding Robert Fenton's hopefulness, there was an undefined restlessness about him. Doctor Harland saw it and sent him off to Chicago upon some business for himself. He was gone four weeks. But his mind was not diverted nor refreshed. No reply had come to him from Emma. He was anxious and worried. But there must be some tidings awaiting him in Weston, he thought, as he hastened his return. And indeed there was, — a letter from Emma, which she sent by the hand of her brother.

Robert carried the welcome missive to his own room, and opened it eagerly. It was brief and strange: —

"MR. FENTON, — Will you please release me from my engagement to you? I thought I loved you — but my affections are given to another. I know that you are kind and honorable, and will not wish to retain possession of my hand without my heart. Please reply very soon.

"EMMA DUDLEY."

What is it that keeps the soul, when some whirlwind of sorrow sweeps through all of its pleasant bowers and carries away all that was lovely? Nothing within itself, surely! And woe and ruin be to the soul in such a crisis, if it has no refuge and no helper in God! For lack of this only efficient refuge thousands of men and women make complete shipwreck of their whole being. Never did a sorrow come to any heart more like a dark whirlwind from out a cloudless sky, than did this letter to Robert Fenton, from his promised wife! He had thought she was so good and true! She had given to him the love of a young, pure heart! And he loved her so! Now she asks him to give her up to another! It was so unexpected, so strange, so bitter, that Robert could not take in all of its meaning at once. A feeling of being stunned was upon him, and for a time the only thing that he could realize was this,—that the woman he loved now asked him to do something that would contribute to her happiness? Could he refuse to do it? No! For the loyalty of his most loyal heart would never deny to her any request she could make! Nothing, unless it was a wrong. And Emma Dudley — his Emma — would do no wrong! Whether this was a wrong being done to him-

self, Robert Fenton did not now even think. His only thought was, that for the sake of her own happiness, Emma wished him to release her from her promise to himself. And was not her happiness dearer to him than his own? Had he not pledged himself to consult her comfort before he did his own, for all of life? Should he hesitate, then, to give what she had now asked of him? No! And so there was no delay. The next mail carried his brief and kind reply to Emma Dudley:—

"My Only Loved One,—

"Your happiness, my Emma, is of more value to me than my own! If some other man can make you happy beyond the possibility of my doing so, I give you up!

"Robert Fenton."

When this message had been sent, Robert began to think of himself. What was the meaning of all this? His dream of love and of a home life had been so bright, and pure, and sure! Could anything of earth have seemed more sure? And was there no truth, or real worth, in woman? And in love? Yes. Robert knew, in himself, that there is a true, real love. And he could not remember his mother without believing in the reality of a true

womanhood. Had he not regarded Emma Dudley as the perfection of all womanhood? He must still think so. He loved her; he would love her always.

Some days went by, and Robert Fenton was still in a dazed state of mind. He knew not what to think of himself. He had the feeling that something bright and beautiful was taken out of his life forever, but he had no keen sorrow over the thought. Was it because he thought he had given his Emma to a happiness, greater than he would have made for her himself? Perhaps so. Some souls are capable of an abnegation like this. But only when the All-Power of the Divine Friend teaches and upholds them. Robert Fenton was upheld by that Power, as the great Refiner gently led him into a still more fiery crucible!

One morning a lady came into Doctor Harland's office, to get some simple medicine. Robert was alone, and had not attended much to dealing out medicines, but he could prepare this, and as he gave it to her, she remarked carelessly, —

"It seems that Emma Dudley is to be married to Esquire Heyward, of York, instead of to you, Mr. Fenton?"

"Heyward? Did you say Heyward, Mrs. Miles?"

"Yes, George Heyward. He was in your class at Yale College."

Robert controlled himself, until he could get away to his own room. Then he had to meet the reality of the fact,—his Emma was to become the wife of George Heyward! This news was even more like a desolating whirlwind than Emma's letter; but he must meet it in all of its fury. The hope that he was really promoting the happiness of the woman he loved, had wonderfully helped Robert in giving her up. But the comfort this hope had been to him was now taken away. He knew that Heyward was a brilliant man in society, and a favored one with ladies; but he was, in every way, unworthy of Emma Dudley. And how could her own refined, pure nature be happy long as his wife? Oh! he could not give her up to George Heyward! But he had relinquished all claims upon her, himself, and could do nothing now to prevent the marriage. A storm of grief and rebellion, more fierce than that of his boyhood over the death of his mother, swept through the whole being of Robert Fenton. The doubts and questionings of that long ago evening in Marlow now came rushing into his mind, —

"If God is indeed so good, why does He

allow such sorrows, such wrongs, such injustice? If He has all power, *why* does He permit the wicked to flourish, and to have their own way so often in this life? And *why* must they who try to serve Him, have so often their dearest earthly hopes blasted?"

For a day and a night a fierce conflict raged within the soul of Robert Fenton. But the low voice of the Refiner replied to his soul:—

"God is good, just, holy! What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter!"

Robert Fenton knew what prayer was. He had learned to trust in God, as his Father and Saviour. But he was now struggling in a crucible, in which, through a strong man's agony, the dross would be purified from the fine gold.

In this crucible, wounded self-love and an unsubmissive will must be consumed.

"To think that George Heyward should win from me my affianced wife! That I should be compelled to yield her up to him! It must not be so! I cannot have it! Oh! Father in Heaven, *why* must I suffer so, in the sweetest joys of life? My mother so soon taken away, and now my promised wife lost in this manner! Oh! *why* must this come to me?"

A day and a night this hard conflict went on. Then Robert Fenton yielded his own will to the

will of the Heavenly Refiner, and now the spirit of his prayer was, "Yes, my Father, Thy will be done! Thou art altogether good and kind. I trust Thee. Thou knowest what is best for me, and for Emma. Perhaps, in some way, she will serve Thee best as the wife of George Heyward. Perhaps she is to lead him to a knowledge of Thyself. Let Thy will be done with us all. I give myself up to Thee, to serve Thee in any way. Thou wilt lead and help me!"

The conflict was ended now, and a great peace of soul came to Robert Fenton.

But his pale face alarmed Doctor Harland.

"Why, Robbie, what is the trouble?"

And Robert could but confide to his good friend the story of his disappointment. Doctor Harland was indignant, and exclaimed, —

"The hussy! How could she desert you, for any man!"

"Do not blame Emma; it must be God's will, and best as it is."

"Well, well, my boy, we will not talk of her; let it all go. She will live to regret her choice. But I cannot have you looking that way. Come, I tell you what we will do. I need rest; wife wants to go to Europe; we will all go together; we will go to England first. Over there by the lakes of Windermere, or among the hills of Scot-

land, you and I will be like two boys chasing butterflies until you are yourself again. Then we will go over to Germany, and you may attend medical lectures awhile."

Robert felt in himself the need of mental rest, and some change of circumstances. Just now, the thought of being borne upon the ocean's ever-tossing waves seemed a welcome change. And amid the solitude of that world of waters he would come nearer to God and rest! So Robert assented to the doctor's suggestion, and immediate preparations were made for the trip.

But Robert could not leave Weston and America without seeing Emma Dudley. They had not met since their broken engagement. But he must see her face once more. The evening previous to leaving for Europe, Robert called at her home. He did not intend to speak of his love, but he could not control all expression of it as he again looked upon that face so dear to him, his own once! And so like the face of his mother! Could he keep the gentle pathos out of his voice as he said,—

"My Emma! I must call you mine once more! But I do not come now to recall anything of our past joys or hopes. I come to look into your face once more. I could not be denied this. To-morrow I leave for Europe. I may never return.

There is no censure in my heart for you; there is no feeling, only the true love I so surely gave to you, and which cannot die! I leave with you my best wishes, and the assurance that I shall ever pray that God will shield you, in all of your life. But Emma, my own darling one! Allow me to be to you the true friend that I am, in this time of our last meeting, and permit me to plead with you, not to trust yourself to a man like George Heyward! I know him well, for we were classmates at Yale. I certainly am not saying this in any hope of winning you back to myself. That cannot be! But my sole desire is for your own welfare, which is very dear to me! And by the memory of my own precious mother, I pray that you may be shielded from trials that laid her in an early grave! To avoid this, do not marry George Heyward!"

Emma Dudley had listened in evident agitation; but, at this last appeal, she turned in anger away, and without a word or a look, even, hastened away.

Was this the same woman to whom Robert Fenton had given so noble a love;—and for whose happiness he had been willing to sacrifice his own? True, he had received help from Heaven to meet this trial. But he was a man of keenest sensibilities, and he could but suffer

keenly after such an interview with the woman so loved, and so strangely lost! Again the affairs of this earthly life seemed to Robert to be only a confused tangle! No order, no harmony, no wise adjustment. So, to the untaught eye, in the studio of the artist, all is a hopeless disjointment, in its various parts of a whole. But Robert Fenton will not lose his faith in God. And as time goes on, he will learn more fully, this truth,—that God holds within His own hand, the clue to all affairs of earth, and nothing can elude His kind and wise inspection. Robert will find, too, that it is not in the bright path of earthly success and joy, that man's best good is wrought out. There are many ways in which God molds and fashions souls for His service on earth, and for the perfect life in Heaven.

A rough block of marble may lie forever in a garden of rare flowers, and never become anything but the same unsightly stone. But the skilful and severe use of a hammer and chisel, in the hands of the sculptor, unfolds a life-like form, of exquisite beauty. So it is in the dispensations of the Divine Sculptor.

V.

In After Years.

"One summer eve, with pensive thought,
I wandered on the sea-beat shore."

A YOUNG voice was singing "Shells of Ocean," and as the sweet refrain came to me, wafted upon the evening air, I laid my book aside, to listen to the favorite melody.

It was my cousin Idnella singing. There had ever been a wonderful charm in her voice, to me, since we first met, in early childhood. And this evening it was especially restful.

My own parents died while I was an infant, leaving me in surroundings that chilled my young heart, making me a timid child, shrinking ever from meeting with other children. But when my mother's only sister, Emma Heyward, received me into her care and for the first time I saw my cousin Idnella, I was irresistibly drawn towards her. And the little one, — after a few moments of wondering gaze into my stranger

face,—held out her arms, and sprang to meet me. From that hour we were as sisters, in the loving care of my aunt. What a happy child I became!—always happy as the years went on, only when my orphan-heart mourned the loss of my own parents. At those times it was my cousin who seemed to understand best my unspoken feelings. And she always comforted me. Indeed, in those years nothing could soothe me so soon as her sweet voice in singing, and her merry, ringing laugh.

It was evident, in childhood, that Idnella was unusually sensitive. Maturing girlhood developed this more fully; and with this, the intuitive power of feeling the sorrows of others, and giving to them efficient sympathy. This power, in its truest form, is one of woman's holiest missions.

With my cousin Idnella there was a quick response to all that was sad or joyful. Ah! this keen sensibility enfolded that fearful endowment for woman,—the capacity for intense happiness and intense suffering.

But nothing of sorrow came to my cousin, and nothing to interrupt our home enjoyments, until I was sixteen years old, and Idnella was two years younger. At that time it was thought best that I should attend school away from Weston.

For three years I had been at home only during my vacations. My last term of absence had been a longer one than usual; and at my return I was received with a glad welcome. Idnella, especially, met me with every expression of joy.

"Oh! I am so glad, Edith!—so very glad that you have come at last! How could you stay away so long?"

"Ah! little could she know how I had longed to be with her again, nestling under the protecting love of mother at home."

Yet somehow the old-time pleasures were not easily renewed; and the former happiness did not seem to pervade the home atmosphere.

My Aunt Emma was indeed the same loving mother; but I could see the shadow of some sorrow, and the too evident traces of a severe struggle upon her usually placid face.

Idnella was the same sweet cousin, with her ever-ready response to all calls upon her kindness and love. But in some way a sad change had come over her. She was not, as formerly, the sunshine of the house. The ringing laugh and the singing were not heard; and I noticed that her lips often trembled, between smiles and tears. But most often the tears came and chased the smile away.

"What is it, Idnella?" I said, a few days after my return.

"What is what, Edith?"

"Why, — what is the matter with our singing bird? I have not heard you sing one note since I came home. Are you not glad to have me come?"

"Yes, indeed, you darling sister! I am more glad than I can tell you. Oh, I have needed you so much — so much!"

This last was said in a tone of deeper sadness than I could have thought possible from Cousin Idnella. But in a moment she added, "I will sing again sometime, but I cannot now."

It was near the close of this same day, that I heard her singing the song we often sang together. Idnella was now sitting just within the door of the wide front hall. The woodbine and honeysuckle covered with their thick foliage the trellis about the door, and made a pretty frame for her, as she sat in the old-fashioned rocking-chair, rocking and singing. This had been a favorite amusement with Idnella even from babyhood. Often she had given expression to some joy, or soothed some grief away, in rocking and singing.

"Is she doing this now?" I thought, as from

my seat, behind the white lilac, I watched her unobserved.

It was a pleasant evening in June; and the prospect spread out before us was one of rare beauty. Our home was situated upon a commanding eminence, from which was seen a wide landscape. Farm-houses and meadows, wood-crowned hills and lovely valleys, the village of Weston at the foot of the hill, and the church spire rising up from among the embowering trees. Through an opening in the hills we had a glimpse of the Connecticut River. Then hills rising behind hills; and beyond and above them all, in the blue distance, towered the mountains of Vermont. The sun lingered low in the western sky; and clouds of crimson, white, purple, and golden hue, were gathering to crown his sinking behind that far-off mountain peak.

For a time I was wholly absorbed in watching the beautiful panorama of the changing clouds and sunset. Then I turned to Idnella to receive, as I had ever done before, her joyous sympathy in the lovely scene. But I saw at once that she had not even seen it. She was not singing now; but in silence sat with her face turned to the Eastern hills, above which the full moon was rising in cloudless splendor. There was a

beauty in that scene, but not so joyous as in the golden sunset.

And why does my glad-hearted cousin turn away from the one to the other to-night? I must know. I went to her, knelt by her side, and laid my face to her own. Then I found that she was silently weeping. So, I only whispered, "Come, darling, come with me to the west chamber." And, drawing her to me, we went up-stairs together.

The west chamber had been a special delight to Idnella and me from our childhood. It had such curious cupboards and drawers in its ceiled walls; and a most wonderful old cabinet that had descended to our grandfather Dudley from an English ancestor.

But most of all we loved the west window, from which we often watched the sunset.

Sometimes, in our childhood days, as we saw the sun going behind the mountain in the brightness of crimson and golden clouds, Idnella and I whispered to each other, — "Heaven must be over there."

I now led my cousin to a seat by the window, and, folding her within my arms, said, —

"My darling sister, do tell me what is troubling you so. I must know!"

"Oh, Edith! how can I tell you? How can

I ever speak of it? It is so hard, — so cruel! And I thought he was so good, — so grand! And I loved him so. But I can never love him again! never — never!"

And then she wept and sobbed convulsively, as I had never seen her do before.

What could I say or do to comfort her? Nothing for a while, only to hold her very closely in my arms, and move my hand, with a loving caress, over the dear, drooping head.

But what was the cause of this? It could be no slight hurt that was now agitating this sensitive heart. What could it be? I tried to fathom the mystery of her words,—

"I loved him so; but I can never love him again!"

My cousin, Idnella Heyward, had a pleasant home; one of the best of mothers, and a father who had always seemed fond and proud of his only daughter. And was he not good? I was compelled now to acknowledge to myself that I was not very well acquainted with my uncle, George Heyward. He was a large, portly man, with a dignified look and manner. I could not remember the time when he had been very familiar or social in his family circle. He had always treated me kindly, but he had never won the confidence of my orphan-heart. But there

was always a peculiar tenderness in his manner toward Idnella. And she, with her impulsive nature and need of loving and being loved, had always clung very closely to her noble-looking father.

For some years Uncle Heyward had been much away from home. He kept an oversight of the farm and home affairs. But some business away from home appeared to engross his mind.

During the three years I had been attending school away from Weston, I rarely met my uncle in my vacation visits home. Once, in reply to my questions, Aunt Emma told me that Uncle Heyward was then working for his political party, and had some expectations of being elected to office himself.

But nothing in all this gave me any clue to the cause of Idnella's grief. And as I would not question her again at present, I could only try to soothe her with caressing and loving words. At length she fell into the deep sleep that often comes after exhausting nervous excitement.

The morning after this scene I persuaded Idnella to go with me for a walk. We had a long ramble through the fields, and over the hills by the woodland that was so familiar from

our childhood. The pure air, perfume of June flowers, and charm of bird-song, proved to be a good tonic for both of us. Idnella appeared more cheerful when we returned.

At the close of the day, as we were sitting with Aunt Emma in the parlor, a carriage was heard coming rapidly up the avenue, and a loud voice was shouting to the horses. The voice was a strange one to me; but I saw that my aunt and cousin became very pale, and in the face of my cousin there was a look of terror.

Soon heavy, unsteady steps were heard, and Uncle Heyward came into the room. But was that man my uncle? Surely, I had never seen him with that strange look and manner.

As her father came into the room, Idnella sprang away like a wounded deer; but he called after her as she fled up-stairs, —

"Here, come back! What do you run away for when I come? I say, come down here!"

How strangely rough he was!

As Idnella did not return in obedience to her father's command, he turned to his wife and said, harshly, —

"Is this the way you train your girl to meet her father now-a-days?"

My aunt replied only by her tears, and he went on, —

"Crying, are you? Always crying, or silent now! I wish to goodness I could have some peace when I do come home!"

I had been standing in mute astonishment at a scene I had never witnessed before, and which was so unexpected.

My uncle now turned to me.

"Well, Edith, can you speak to me?" He held out his hand that I saw was trembling. As he bent his tall form to take my hand, his breath came into my face, and it was full of sickening whiskey.

The mystery was solved! I now understood the cause of Cousin Idnella's sorrow. My Uncle Heyward had become a drunkard!

VI.

Emma Heyward's Story.

"There are youthful dreamers,
Building castles fair, with stately stairway,
Asking blindly
Of the future what it cannot give."

— *Longfellow.*

IN the evening, after Uncle Heyward was in the stupor of intoxication, and Cousin Idnella had again wept herself to sleep, Aunt Emma sent for me. I found her in a room which she had fitted up for her own especial use. It was a small chamber, away from all noise and intrusion, and having a west window with its restful outlook. Idnella and I had learned to know that when Aunt Emma went to that chamber, it was to be alone with the Bible and with her God.

When I entered the room, my aunt was sitting by the table, with her head resting upon her hands. As I came to her, she held out one arm and drew me to a seat close beside

her. Her voice was low and sad, as she began speaking: —

"My dear Edith, the time has come for me to talk frankly with you. There are many things it seems necessary that I should tell you, yet I shrink from doing so. Indeed, I am almost incapable of making the effort to-night. But it must be done, for there are some things you must know without longer delay."

For a moment my aunt was silent, struggling with her grief; then she continued, —

"Since you came home this time, you have felt the change in our darling Idnella. To-night you have been shocked by seeing the change in your uncle. And other changes are coming to us, my dear, that you must be brave to meet, and help me to bear.

"Before I speak of these coming changes, I will tell you something of my past life. It is necessary for you to know about this, to help you to understand my present trials, and the situation of our family.

"This homestead, as you know, was your Grandfather Dudley's place, and my own happy home until I married. I will not now speak of the dear family group that once made this a most happy home. But I must say of myself, that I was most ambitious and self-seeking. My inti-

mate friends did not know how selfish and full of ambition I was in my girlhood. I did not see it myself then; but I know now that it was so. I wished for, and procured when possible, all best things. I was fond of study, but I must excel or be unhappy. I sought to obtain all that was rare and beautiful in nature, in art, and in life. For my friends, I craved and intended to possess only the choicest ones of earth. There might have been no wrong in such aspirations, if they had not emanated from supreme selfishness. My own happiness was my only goal. Can I wonder, then, that the Divine Refiner has seen a need-be for a fiery crucible?

"I first met your Uncle Heyward while I was attending school away from Weston. He came to the village only for a visit, but he prolonged his stay.

"Our chance acquaintance soon became a very pleasant friendship. For Mr. Heyward was most gentlemanly in manner, intellectual, and interesting in his conversation. Marked attention from such a man was flattering to my pride. But friendship was all I cared for at first. One thought of anything more than this would have been instantly rejected by me; for in Weston there was one to whom I had promised my hand in marriage, and I loved him.

"Robert Fenton came to Weston as the *protègé* of Doctor Harland; but he was away so constantly at school, that we never met until he had been some time in college. It was out there in our grove we met, at a gathering of young people. I was startled by the intense gaze of a stranger young man. There was no rudeness in his look, but only a mournful wistfulness. We were soon introduced, when Mr. Fenton made an earnest apology and said I resembled his mother so much, his eyes were attracted to my face. And in the after-times, when we had become pledged friends, Mr. Fenton often alluded to his mother, with a reverence and love that few sons cherish.

"I never fully understood what it was, but there had been some sad trouble in his home. Something about his father, that shadowed his early life and broke the heart of his mother. It must have been this that had helped to exalt his opening manhood. He certainly was worthy of woman's truest confidence. I think I did give to him my best love. If George Heyward had not come to my side, appealing to my ambition, and luring my heart by a more brilliant position in life, I should have become the wife of Mr. Fenton, and with him, perhaps, have realized the home-life of my girlhood dreams.

"But if I had kept my plighted word, and been true to Robert Fenton, I might have been so satisfied with an earthly love, as never to have been compelled to turn to God for all comfort, as I have done now."

Aunt Emma was again silent, with a far-away look on her face, that told of struggles and of triumphs in the past.

With a sigh she resumed her story.

"Yes, gradually, but surely, I was won away from Robert Fenton, and consented to become the wife of Mr. Heyward. I then wrote to Mr. Fenton, asking to be released from my engagement to him. I understood his generous heart too well to have any doubt about his yielding to my wishes in this matter. I can never know what my letter was to Mr. Fenton. But his reply, giving to me what I asked, was very gentle, but brief.

"I was then at full liberty to anticipate the future that was so bright before me. Instead of being the wife of a toiling man, in a humble home, my position was to be one of ease and wealth as the wife of Esquire Heyward.

"But when I returned to Weston, I met with some unexpected barriers to my anticipated joy. I found that all my friends considered it a great wrong that I had done to myself, as well as to

Mr. Fenton, in breaking my engagement with him. They all knew and trusted him. Mr. Heyward was an entire stranger to them. But all of their inquiries about him only elicited the facts that he was a lawyer, — wealthy, intellectual, and social in his tastes and habits; and that among his friends he did not fail to take his glass of brandy. This alarmed all of my home friends. But they reasoned and expostulated with me in vain. I knew that Mr. Heyward did use wine and brandy; but this did not trouble me, for I was then entirely ignorant of the danger from such a habit.

"Even my wronged friend, Mr. Fenton, came to warn me of my danger. It was down there by the old arbor he found me alone, one evening. I had not seen him since our broken engagement. In my thoughtless selfishness, I had never dreamed of the sorrow my own inconstancy might be to Mr. Fenton. But as he came to my side that evening, I could but see the impress of much suffering upon his face. Yet in look and manner there was only his usual gentle kindness during that sad interview. But, ah! there was a new tone in his voice, as he said, —

"'My dear Emma, I must call you mine once more! But I do not come now to recall the

past, but only to look into your face again. To-morrow I go from Weston, probably never to return.'

"And then he went on to assure me that he should ever pray for my best welfare and happiness. But he urged me, for my own sake, not to commit my future into the keeping of a man with such habits as George Heyward.

"While Mr. Fenton had stood by my side, talking, my own mind had been in a whirl of contending emotions, connected with the past and present. But at his appeal in reference to Mr. Heyward, pride gained control of me; and, without giving Mr. Fenton one word, or a look even, I hastily withdrew the hand he had taken, and fled to the house and to my own room.

"Oh, my early, my noble, true friend! He never deserved this from me.

"Mr. Fenton went to Europe, with Doctor and Mrs. Harland, soon after this. I have heard of him as a faithful, successful worker for God, but I have never seen him since that hour."

VII.

Emma Heyward's Story, Continued.

"By the fireside, tragedies are acted,
In whose scenes appear two actors only,—
Wife and husband."

—*Longfellow.*

AUNT Emma remained now so long silent, that I began to think she would not resume her story. At last she said,—

"But I must hasten on. After a time my friends allowed me to go on in the path of my own choosing. I was married, and immediately went to my husband's home. It was a beautiful one, and for a time it seemed a very Eden of happiness.

"My first sorrow came when my babe died at its birth, in the beginning of the second year of my marriage. But for some time previous to this, a shadow had come over my Eden. I could not understand from whence it came. Our home was still full of every luxury,—still bright and beautiful. Many friends gathered about us. My husband was the same brilliant, intellectual

man in society. Oh, how proud I was to be the wife of such a man! How I exulted when I saw him the attractive centre at fashionable gatherings! I know, now, that my girlish heart was first lured from its allegiance to Robert Fenton by this very commanding fascination in Mr. Heyward. To become his wife dazzled my imagination. But as my husband, I gave to him my love as a wife. And now, I was clinging very fondly to him, trying to find all my happiness in him. But I surely felt the chill of some cloud lowering near me.

"Our home was not far from the city, yet my husband was often detained away for days at a time. He always expressed much regret at being compelled to be so long absent. The second year of our marriage these detentions became more frequent and more protracted.

"At Christmas, that year, we were invited to attend a social gathering. When my husband was leaving for the city, on the morning of this day, he said to me: 'I may not get away very early; you must not wait for me. But I will certainly be there to accompany you home.'

"I went alone, in the carriage. It was a large and brilliant gathering of our most aristocratic acquaintances, and the entertainment was varied to suit the different guests. I was especially de-

lighted with the singing and music, and was in the full enjoyment of a gem of rare sweetness, when my husband came into the room. He did not come to me, but from where I was standing I saw there was in his face and manner something unlike his usual gentlemanly self-possession. My thought was that some business must have disturbed him greatly.

"Soon I heard his voice, in a loud and boisterous tone, in a distant part of the room. Then, in a moment, a low voice near me spoke words not intended for my ear, but which came to me distinctly, —

"'Esquire Heyward has dipped into his brandy cups rather too much to-night, to be out in company.'

"These words were like an electric-shock to me. I turned quickly, and looked more closely at my husband. His face was fearfully flushed, and his whole appearance in a disorder I had never seen in him before. At that moment he was standing in a group of gay young ladies, who watched him with ill-suppressed mirth, or with contempt, as he tried to talk with them and give expression to some unmeaning compliments.

"I could not mistake or be blinded now; my husband was intoxicated! He, who always before had been the self-poised gentleman, and the cen-

tre of intellectual and admiring friends in society, was now making of himself an object of sport by his drunken foolishness!

"Shame and terror paralyzed my own faculties; but a true friend came to my aid, and through his efforts my husband was persuaded to return home.

"When we entered our own luxurious parlor, my husband fell upon the sofa. The friend who had accompanied us home could do nothing more for us; nothing for my now unconscious husband, and nothing to comfort me, so he left us. And I was alone; oh! never so alone in all my life before!

"Ah! of all the agony that woman's heart is capable of suffering, nothing is so bitter as when she finds that her most trusted, her best loved friend, is unworthy, — that her idol is only clay!

"Oh! indeed could that senseless inebriate be my husband, — my handsome, noble husband, of whom I had been so proud? My husband a drunkard! From the whispered remark I overheard at the party, I knew this was what the world called him now. Oh! the feeling of humiliation that rushed over me like heavy waves!

"For a time it certainly seemed that my life-blood was frozen, and I could never remove from my kneeling posture by the side of my

husband. With my hands clasped over my heart I silently looked upon his changed face. Yes, in that strange sleep I could see now the changes that dissipation had wrought.

"Would such scenes as this go on, and on, in our home, through life? So—I had heard—it was in many once happy homes. Would it be so in mine?

"Then I remembered the fears of my friends about my marriage, and especially the earnest warning of my noble friend, Robert Fenton. As the old memories came back to me, the hard tension that had pressed upon my heart relaxed, tears came to my relief, and I wept as I had never in my life before.

"At last there came to me more cheering and hopeful thoughts. 'This will not, cannot happen again! When my husband comes to realize the events of this night, he will feel so alarmed himself that he will never use stimulants again. I believe he loves me, and by that love I will plead with him to throw it all away. Oh! I must win him from this terrible ruin!'

"But even while I was saying this to my heart, there came to me a foreboding fear that even my pleading, or tears, or love, might fail, or have little effect in overcoming habits which I now felt sure must be of long standing.

"There came to me a new element of distress, in a flood of self-reproach, as I remembered my own unfaithfulness as a professed Christian. I knew that Mr. Heyward was far from being a Christian man, when I promised to become his wife. But I indulged the pleasant day-dream, that I could win him to go with me in all of those duties, when we were married. Instead of doing that, I had readily yielded to his influence, and gone willingly with him into all the paths of worldly pleasure.

"And more than this. For step by step he had led me away from all the sacred associations of my girlhood life, until I had become almost willing to give up my Bible and my belief in God. I had not realized this before, nor thought how far away I had wandered from my faith in God. But in this night of intense suffering I saw it all. I had been untrue to my own soul and to God. Now, through a bitter trial, he was showing to me where I stood, and teaching me that an immortal soul can have permanent happiness only in Himself.

"In deep repentance I now returned to Him; and, like a weary, lost child, I again trusted in His infinite mercy and love.

"In tears, in prayer, and in renewed hope in God, I spent that long, long night.

VIII.

Emma Heyward's Story, Continued.

"Madness and woe in the wine cup."

IT was morning, and the sun filled the room with cheering brightness, when my husband aroused from his sleep. Starting up, he exclaimed, —

"'Why, Emma, what is the matter? Are you sick? Why are you here?'

"To these questions I could not control my voice enough to reply. He came to me, passing his hand caressingly over my head, and looking down into my face, and said, —

"'You certainly are sick, wife! Come, let me take you to your room.'

"That long, sad night had wrought too strongly upon my nerves to allow me to make my appeal wisely, and impulsively I said, —

"'Oh! my husband, have you no remembrance of the past night? A night of agony to me! My darling, do promise me now, that you will never drink any stimulants again!'

"A look unlike any I had seen before, came into my husband's face, as he said,—

"'Ah! that's it, is it? I was drunk last night, was I? Well, it is not the first time, by any means. But I am sorry it happened so. I did not intend to be out in company in that condition—nor trouble you about it. But meeting an old friend, just as I was leaving the city, I took some extra brandy with him. I have never troubled you with this before, Emma, and I will not again, if I can help it; but do not ask me to give up the use of stimulants,—for I never will do so! I am surprised that you ask me to do it. You knew when you married me that I drank wine and brandy. I have used them too long to give them up, and shall never make any effort to do so.'

"I was now weeping again in bitter disappointment; and my husband tried to soothe me by caresses and a kinder tone.

"'Don't weep and make yourself unhappy over this. You know that my love for you, and regard for your comfort, have made me keep all this out of our home and away from your knowledge. You will understand the truth now about some of my long absences from home. But do not let it make you unhappy. I shall be all right when I return to you.

We have been happy together; we will still be happy in our home. But you must let me *alone* in this, for I will not allow any one—not even my wife—to interfere in this matter!'

"My girlhood dreams of the future had been bright and beautiful! God was leading me to find happiness only in Him.

"I must not linger, only to say I never again found any heart-rest in my beautiful home, or my husband. Between us there was no longer the loving interchange of confidence. How could there be? He knew that my blind trust was gone, and he would make no effort to recall it.

"I was still a loving wife, and would have made any sacrifice for my husband's good. But I was powerless to combat his strong will, and ceased to plead or to remonstrate with him. I was helpless in a crucible of disappointment and ruined hopes. No! not helpless,—for He who was taking me through the Furnace of Affliction, is a strong Helper! He kept me from sinking then! He has never left me!

"My husband did not come to me again intoxicated; but as months went on, I could see that he was changing, sinking more surely under the influence of his drinking habits. In addition to this, I began to find out that my husband's financial affairs were greatly embar-

rassed. At times, when his brain was confused by brandy, he had entered into unwise business transactions. At other times he had plunged into some wild speculation, finally into gambling. Gradually, but surely, he lost, until his large fortune and his extensive business were swept away!

"Five years after our marriage, we were compelled to give up our lovely home to others.

"Both of my parents were dead. This place was my portion from my father's estate, and to this home my husband brought me six months before our Idnella came to us.

"My grief over the intemperance of my husband, was very great. I left the home to which I went so happy as a bride, with very little regret.

"When I entered this dear old home again, a feeling of being shielded, seemed to come over me. Its quiet, its associations, and home-love atmosphere, welcomed me with their sweet restfulness!

"If my husband had remained even as he had been in the months previous, I might have attained to some quiet happiness in this home of my early life; but the loss of his wealth, and the failure of all his schemes, caused him to throw off all restraint. He became reckless

and drank incessantly. He came home every day intoxicated.

"For a time I watched his coming, in the hope that he would return to me in his right mind. Then I began to dread his coming, — trembling in a fever of hope and fear! If I could have restored my husband to his own rightful self, I would willingly have suffered much at that time; but a change came in my feelings towards him. Gradually, but surely, my heart became full of a feeling of contempt, of repulsion, and of hate towards my husband. His bloated, red face, staggering form, and silly efforts to talk, seemed such a burlesque upon humanity, and in him so needless, that at length I loathed the sight of him, or the sound of his voice! I could not help it! And when he entered the house my feelings compelled me to fly to the most distant room, away from him!

"This was a fearful state of mind for me to remain in. I could go to no one. I was alone with God, and He did not fail me.

"An old friend of my mother's had been watching me, and understood how it was. Her motherly heart prompted her to come to my aid. She went to my husband in one of his calm moments, and said, —

"'Esquire Heyward, do not be offended with me, for I come as a true friend.'

"'Well, Aunt Polly, what is it?'

"'I want to say to you, that if there is not an immediate change in your home, your child, if it should live, will never speak to you.'

"'What do you mean, madam?'

"'I mean just what I have said. And you may ask any doctor in the land if my words are not true. You have yourself so wrought upon the feelings of your wife by your drinking habits, that she will not see you, nor speak to you, if she can avoid it. It will be just so with your child unless you change, and that very soon.'

"My husband had not so entirely lost his manhood as to be indifferent to such an appeal. The plain, motherly talk had the desired effect. He was startled and aroused, and by this means his strong will asserted itself in the right direction. All that could intoxicate was banished from our home. My husband was once more the quiet gentleman when he came into my presence.

"My storms seemed to have passed by, and I was sheltered within a quiet haven, when my darling Idnella was given to me!

"My husband has always manifested a proud

fondness for his daughter. But there has ever been a wistful gentleness in his manner toward her, as if he had some fears about having his full share of her love, or of not being able to retain it.

"For many years all use of stimulants seemed to be given up, but I know now that the habit was never fully abandoned. He resumed his business in the city, and after a time there were again long absences from home, which, he said, the press of business required. When he came to us he was always the quiet, kind, but not very social man, that you, my Edith, are most familiar with.

"Though I had long been fearful about my husband's habits, I saw nothing to give me special alarm until two years ago. An exciting Presidential campaign was in progress, and my husband was drawn into the conflict. He had some talent as a speaker, and gave his services to his party, his political friends promising him some office for himself. All of this led him deeper into the old dissipation, but when indulging he still kept away from home. To his daughter he appeared to be the noble man and kind father, and Idnella loved him with the strength of her most loving nature.

"Ah! I am sure now that my own trials,

previous to her birth, have given to my daughter a heart-hunger for love that will never be satisfied this side of Heaven.

"It is not a year since Idnella first learned about the drinking habits of her father. His political schemes failed, and his friends did not give him the office they promised. This exasperated him, and again he threw off every barrier of self-control, and returned to his wife and daughter deeply intoxicated. Idnella could not understand his condition, but thought her father strangely sick, and anxiously ministered to him. But as this sickness came day after day, and she learned the cause of it, the change in her manner toward him was most sad. There was in Idnella the same trembling at the sound of his coming footstep, the same disgust and avoidance I so well remember in myself.

"'I cannot help it, mamma,' she often says to me, in bitter weeping.

"If her father had never transformed himself again into a staggering, driveling inebriate, this feeling would never have been developed in his loving child; but the evil has been wrought out, the fearful wrong to my precious daughter is accomplished. Oh! can it ever be undone?"

For a few moments the mother's lips quivered in a silent struggle, and then she went on,—

"My own heart has been in a severe conflict for the last six months. My husband sinking into a confirmed drunkard, Idnella grieving, and changing, and losing all control of herself. And I — what could I do, only to go to that Friend who has been my sure Helper in past trials? He does sustain me, though His leading will soon place my mother-heart in a new and fiery crucible.

"Our family physician says Idnella must be removed entirely away from her father. This involves the necessity of her going away from home and from her mother.

"My brother, your Uncle William, wishes to take Idnella with his family when they return to their home in California. I have consented to this arrangement.

"Do not start so, dear Edith; you must be here and help me to meet this trial.

"Oh! my heart would faint in this crucible if God did not permit me to hope that this separation from Idnella may not be a long one. My brother promises to return her to us as soon as it seems best.

"He thinks, however, that my husband is now too confirmed in his habits ever to reform, and has been urging me to go with Idnella to his home, and leave my husband to his folly. My

views of a wife's duty will not allow me to do so. I shall suffer keenly giving up my precious child, but I know she will be tenderly cared for in my brother's home, and I am hoping she will return to us by another year.

"In the meanwhile, I must remain by him to whom I gave my wifely promise. In his present condition I can have no comfort with him, but I will shield him from what suffering I can. Though he has made himself the miserable man that he is, yet I am his wife, and my place is by his side, even to the end of life.

"If tears and prayers avail with God, and I know that they do, my husband will yet be saved."

IX.

New Shadows.

"Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer, and be strong."

— *Longfellow.*

DURING this recital of Aunt Emma's story, I had listened as if spell-bound. My heart was too full, and my thoughts too busy, to make it easy for me to break the silence that followed her closing words.

I raised my head and looked into her face. She was very pale; but her expression and whole attitude denoted high resolves and an unfaltering purpose.

I had long known that Aunt Emma trusted in God, but it had never seemed such a reality as it did when I now looked into her white, quiet face. She had suffered much, — she was now in a crucible of keen sorrow, — and yet was so gently calm! Most surely she was leaning upon a sustaining Helper, who was All-Powerful.

But I could no longer repress my own feelings, and said,—

"But, Aunt Emma, how can we have this so? How can we live without Idnella?"

"My dear child, we must live without her for a time, for her own good. Her nervous system is now seriously affected. Our physician says that he will not be responsible for any consequences that may follow if she is not taken entirely away from her father, at once. My own judgment tells me that he is right. But, oh! how I shall suffer in sending her away from my own care. And yet, woman's heart has often to suffer for those she loves. And whatever good may come to them through her own sacrifices or sufferings, the true-hearted woman will not refuse to endure."

As I now looked into the pure, spiritual face of my aunt, I could not help the questioning,—

"Why is it that the best in this world seem to have the most sorrow?"

"Ah! my dear, it is only through the discipline of trials that there are any best. Our sins are forgiven and blotted out by our Saviour, but no love and no life is pure until it has passed through His crucible, and rests within the hand of the Great Refiner, even our Divine Lord!

"This may seem a dark outlook to the young heart, but there is nothing dark or gloomy in it to those who can view it in the effulgent light of the Sun of Righteousness!"

For a time I was awed into silence again by my aunt's words and manner. Then I asked,—

"Does Idnella know about this, that she is to leave us?"

"She only knows that she is going away for awhile with her uncle and his family. She has grieved so much, and is now in so critical a nervous state, that we dare not let her know she may not return to us, perhaps for years."

"And what does Uncle Heyward say about her going away?"

"He does not know about it. In his present frame of mind it would be useless to attempt to explain the situation to him, but he will begin to ask questions after awhile; then, in some moment when he can understand its meaning, I shall tell him why his daughter is an exile from her father's house. My hope is strong that this will startle him again into giving up his dreadful drinking.

"If in some future day or years, if that must be so, my husband and daughter can be restored to me in health and joy, I will never regret anything I suffer now.

"The future is hidden from us. But God knows it all, and it is safe with Him.

"And now, my dear Edith, you must be my brave-hearted daughter, and help me to meet the coming trials. It is very late, I must not detain you longer. Only let me say this to you,—make my sad experience a beacon-light of warning for your own safety."

When I was again in my own room, my mind was in a whirl of thought and feeling. Ah, time cannot be measured by the length of days! It seemed now so very long since the last evening, when I watched that golden sunset!

I went to the west window and looked out into the summer night. The landscape was so quiet and peaceful beneath the soft light of the full moon! There were the fields, hills, valleys, and distant mountains. The same familiar outlook; yet not the same, for a change seemed to have come over all that had been a joy to me. My aunt and cousin in such trouble! My own heart sharing in all their sorrow! And then,—yes, I was compelled to see it,—there was the shadow of a possible trial falling upon my own bright dreams! I had never thought of this danger to my own happiness, but I could not fail to understand the meaning of

Aunt Emma's words, "Let my sad experience be a beacon-light of warning to you." Oh, how could I believe that such a sorrow as Aunt Emma's was lurking in my earthly path!

When Cousin Idnella and I first entered the village school, I was the same timid girl as in my childhood; ever shrinking from contact with strangers. But in a manly boy, two years older than myself, I soon had a champion and friend. Idnella and I had no brother; but in Howard Fielding we found a brother-like defender, in all of the varied scenes of village school-life. As the years passed on, we had become more to each other than friends.

Only the other evening we stood out there, beneath the old poplars, and talked of our future, when his medical studies should be completed.

My intended husband was a noble man, and worthy of my entire confidence. From whence, then, came that shadow? Alas! it was from that same dire cup that had brought such woe to Aunt Emma and Cousin Idnella!

I felt sure that Howard did not use intoxicating drinks himself; yet, they were not forbidden in his family. His father's cider-brandy and his mother's domestic wine were freely cir-

culated at the social gatherings in their hospitable mansion.

While I was certain that Howard did not take stimulants himself, I knew that he had no decided principle against their daily use. In the light of Aunt Emma's story, I was led to feel that in this lack of decision would lie the possible danger to him and to me.

But Howard is too true not to be willing to see and to do whatever is best for our mutual happiness.

I will talk with him immediately about this, and persuade him to unite with me now in a pledge, shutting out from our married home everything that can intoxicate.

It will—O, it must be all right with Howard and myself! With this thought I at last soothed my heart to rest.

If I had needed any additional argument to convince me that Idnella must go away, I had it the next morning in her pale, haggard face, and in the manner in which she shrank from her father.

The needful preparations were hastily completed, and our darling Idnella left us. She went from us in tears, and with fond caressings; but all unconscious herself how long the time might be before she could return to us.

When the parting was over, Aunt Emma nearly fainted, but went to her Bethel-chamber where she was much alone, and from which she she always came with a look of peace upon her pale face.

After a time letters came from Uncle William, giving us comforting words about Idnella. It was evident that she was receiving the hoped-for benefit in the change of scene.

Idnella wrote of the quiet visiting among the Green Mountains, of the leisurely passing through New York, of the steam-boat sail down the Ohio River, and of going out upon the wonderful prairies of Illinois.

Afterward, they retraced their journey up the Ohio, and, crossing the mountains to Baltimore, went on to Washington. From this place Idnella wrote a long letter to her mother and myself. There was much of her old enthusiasm as she described their night-ride over the Alleghany Mountains. While the others slept, she was awake, enjoying the grand scenery, as they reached the highest point, and began the descent. The moon in a cloudless sky, the different mountain peaks rising against the blue heavens behind them, the opening of wooded valleys, and the country far below, concealed by a misty vapor, giving to it the look of the

boundless ocean. This letter was so full of glowing pictures of what she had enjoyed in this trip, and in going to Mount Vernon, the home of Washington; and her words were so pervaded with her own sunny nature that it brought some of the sunshine into our home, now so silent and shadowed.

And we began to question, —

"Idnella seems to be all right now. Why may she not return to us, instead of going on to California?"

"Ah! but the cause of her trouble is not removed. As things now remain in your home Idnella cannot return without danger to life or reason."

So said our kind, old doctor.

And for how long a time must the precious child be gone, and the mother-heart suffer?

No one, but God, knew!

X.

Shadows Darkening.

"I knew not all; yet something of unrest
Sat on my heart."

—*Hemans.*

MY vacation was closing, when I must return to my school. But I had not carried out the resolution I formed the night Aunt Emma told me her story. I had not had my intended talk with Howard Fielding. Somehow, it had been more difficult than I expected, for me to open that subject to him. It was contrary to my nature to assume the office of a mentor. And how could I do that toward my affianced husband? Would it not appear like a want of entire confidence in him, for me to dictate in this matter? And how could I look into his honest, frank eye, and not trust him fully?

But I could not forget Aunt Emma's story, nor her sorrows, for they were constantly before me. In the bloated, vacant face of my Uncle,

—in the traces of deep suffering upon the face of my aunt,—in the strange exile of my cousin,—I was daily reminded of the danger of indecision in a question like this. And before I was hardly conscious of doing so, I had taken a firm resolve that I would never be married unless my intended husband would unite with me, in a solemn pledge, that all stimulants, as a drink, should be forever excluded from our married home.

But how was I to begin to say this to Howard? When he was by my side all shadows fled away in the sunshine of his love. How could I bring them back?

Yet, when I was alone, I was in a constant conflict with these questionings.

Oh! if I could put this all away, and not trouble my dear friend with it! For I began to feel a little uncertain of the effect of my resolution upon Howard.

After Cousin Idnella left us, he kept me almost constantly by his side, as we rode by the river, through the valleys, and over the wind-swept hills of Weston. He seemed to notice an unusual depression in me, for he evidently made every effort for my comfort, with more than his usual tenderness of manner towards me.

Several times Howard had taken me to his

home. Once his bluff, but kind old father, kept my hand for some moments in his own, as if he wished to assure me that I now belonged to his family; and his mother whispered "my daughter" as she gave me a kiss of welcome. Oh, how my heart exulted in the thought of having a mother, and to be loved and shielded as I knew I would be in the home of Howard Fielding! And could anything of earth now exclude me from that home? Oh, no!

And so, my vacation was almost over, and still Howard knew nothing about my conflicts or my resolution. But still, I lulled my heart with the belief that it would not take long to make it all right when I did ask him about this subject. His true heart would do what was right.

Two days before I must leave Weston, Howard carried me again to his home. In the evening, quite a circle of friends gathered in the pleasant rooms. With other refreshments came the cider-brandy and the domestic wine. And then I saw how eagerly Howard drank of both. a weight of sadness, such as I had never felt before, fell upon my heart.

After a while, Howard came to me with a glass of the ruby wine in his hand.

"You are unusually silent to-night, Edith.

Come, drink some of my mother's best wine with me. It will do you good!"

"Oh, no! Howard, I cannot!"

"Cannot! Why?"

There were so many thoughts and feelings thronging upon my mind, threatening my self-control, that I dared not risk my voice, but I whispered earnestly, "Do not urge me now; to-morrow evening I will tell you why."

It must be done now; I must tell Howard of my decision, and from what I have seen to-night what will be the result? I dared not think.

Our ride to my home was a very quiet one, but Howard was more than usually gentle in his loving care of me.

As he was about to bid me good-night, I asked,—

"Will you come to see me to-morrow evening, Howard?"

"Ah! will I come, you demure little lady? Yes, surely I will, darling, and then I shall want to know why you are so silent and sad this evening."

"You know I am going away soon," I faltered out.

"Yes, I know you are going away, but I know, too, that you are coming back again before long;

and as my wife there will be no more of this going off alone."

Oh! if it were not for this shadow of evil, how like chimes of glad music his words would be to my woman's heart!

That night was to me one of weeping and prayer, until some faith was given to me to trust in God, as my Helper. And in that faith and trust, strength was imparted to me to stand by my resolution, whatever the result might be.

A weak, timid woman, resolving to do what was best, — safe for him she loved, — trusting alone in God. Would He fail to help her? No! never. But, ah! in His own way are His designs to be accomplished.

XI.

Edith Ashton's Crucible.

. . . "He who sits above
In His calm glory, will forgive the love
His creatures bear each other . .
. . . . for its close is dim
Ever with grief, which leads the wrung soul
Back to Him."

—*Hemans.*

WHEN Howard Fielding came to my side, the next evening, there was a new expression upon his face. Was it that he saw too many traces of a struggle in my own face? Or had he passed through some mental conflict himself, since we parted? I could not know, for I would not venture to ask him.

He was very kind and gentle, as he sat down beside me. Yet there was a grave questioning in his eye and smile, as he said,—

"Well, my dear Edith, are there any mysteries to be solved to-night? I think you hinted at something of the kind last evening. There must be no unexplained things between us, you know."

Ah! would Howard be as gently kind when I had told him of my trouble, and the promise he must give to me? There had come a sad doubt into my mind, that sealed my lips for a time.

And then it was so hard for me to say one word that might pain him, I loved him so. I yielded to a womanly impulse and asked,—

"Do you love me very much, Howard?"

"Love you, Edith? Why, what else do I love as I do you, my one darling?"

"Then you will promise me something I want very much?"

"Why—my best loved one—my plighted wife—is there anything you can ask of me, that I will not give you? Do you doubt me, Edith?"

"No, Howard, I do not. I trust you fully. But I have such a favor to ask of you!"

"Well, my darling little mystery, let me know at once what this is. I see that something is troubling you very much, and I shall have to assert the authority of a physician and order you to throw it from your mind before it makes you sick."

While he was saying this, Howard drew my head to rest upon his shoulder, and passed his hand caressingly over my hot forehead.

Could I tell him now and meet the conflict that might come? My heart was again failing me. Then I remembered my pleading with God for help, the previous night. And now the answer came from Him, for my weak heart felt nerved up to go through this trying interview. God surely helped me, for there was no faltering now as I began, —

"My dearest friend, you have often said that our united home would be the happiest that ever husband and wife possessed. But to be and to remain such a home, some things I feel must be excluded. One is, all stimulating drinks. Will you, my dear Howard, unite with me now in a sacred pledge that this shall be so in our home?"

A look of strange surprise came over the face of Howard at my words. But he laughingly said, —

"Why, has my reserved little Edith turned into a temperance lecturer?"

"Only for the home-circle," I replied, trying to meet his bantering tone. But I would not be put off in that way, and said, —

"But, Howard, I am seriously in earnest about this. Will you not give me a promise now that we will banish stimulating drink from our home?"

"And why are you so earnest about this now? Wait until we begin our home together, then we will make it all right."

"Oh! my dear friend, I want a pledge now! I must have it now!"

"My darling Edith, what is it that is troubling you so? I do not quite understand it yet. Are you afraid of anything for yourself, or for me?"

And there was a deeper tenderness in his voice, as he again drew my head to his broad shoulder, and said, —

"Tell me, my promised wife, can you not trust me to shield your happiness with me in our married home?"

"Yes, Howard, I do trust you, but I cannot trust intoxicating drinks in my home. I have of late been taught a fearful lesson of the danger in using them at all."

And then I related to Howard the outlines of Aunt Emma's story. He listened in silence until I had finished, and then said, —

"This is all very sad, and I see has strongly affected you. But surely you are not making any application of this to ourselves, are you, Edith? What is it that alarms you?"

"Oh! Howard! I am alarmed to find that my dearest friend, my intended husband, allows

himself to take of the same wine-cup that has made my Uncle Heyward the wreck of a noble manhood!"

My voice had often faltered and almost failed me while speaking, but from some resource beyond my own, help came that nerved me up to finish.

The silence that for some moments followed, was a painful one. I knew that I had wounded the feelings of the one dearest to me of all on earth. I still felt sure that as soon as his own generous heart had time to assert itself, Howard would thank me for the resolution I had taken, and give me willingly the pledge I asked for our mutual happiness. But suddenly Howard sprang to his feet and began to walk the room. After a few moments he came and stood by me, and said in a constrained, low voice, —

"Edith, who is it that has come between us so, poisoning your mind against me in this way?"

"No one has come between us, Howard! No one can ever do that with me! But the sorrows of my aunt and cousin compel me to realize the full danger of using even wine as a drink. And do not blame me, do not be offended with me, my dearest friend, but I must

say that I have seen that you do use it as a drink!"

"But, Edith, you have never seen me take anything but my mother's domestic wine or brandy."

"Howard, has not using those drinks given you the desire for something stronger?"

I saw that he started, but evaded my question by saying, —

"I honor and love my mother. She is too good herself to keep anything in her house and give it daily to her son, that can injure him or any one else. I cannot have the blame attributed to her that your words to-night imply. My wife must not in any way cast a reproach upon my mother."

As I remained silent, Howard continued, —

"I understand now why you refused to take the wine with me last evening. I hope you will not do it again in my mother's house. In our own home we can make such regulations as we think best. In my mother's home, nothing that she offers to us need be rejected, and must not be again."

There was now a hard glitter in his eye that I had never seen before. But its effect upon me was not to quail, but rather served to nerve me up to continue my appeal.

"Well, Howard, will you not give to me now a promise as to how it shall be in our own home?"

"No, I cannot. At least, I am not prepared to do so. And I think you ought to trust me without any such promise. Besides, in my professional practice, there may be occasions when I may have to break it. And there is no necessity of its being required of me."

Oh, how my heart was aching! But I could not stop now; my last appeal must be made!

"Dear Howard, bear with me in what I now must say! All of this is a matter of life or death to the hope I have cherished of our union! For many weeks I have been praying over this subject. I have been learning some new lessons about prayer, and trusting in God. It has become more of a reality, that He is my Father and Saviour — and my Helper. He knows that I love you, and you only; and that I can never love another as I love you, Howard. But He has made it very clear to me that I must come to this decision: — That I will never be married until my intended husband gives to me the pledge I now ask of him!"

Howard was standing by my side, and in my earnestness I laid my hand upon his arm. At my closing words he gave a quick start,

as if he received an electric shock, and exclaimed, —

"Oh, no, Edith! you do not mean that! You surely cannot, for a whim, — a phantom, — break your plighted word to me!"

"It is no whim, no phantom, to me, my dear friend. It is something too real, — too full of sad suggestions!"

"Well, I think this evening is a black dream. Why must it be so, when our love has always been so full of joy, and our union was to be so happy? And it will still be so, if you will only dismiss from your mind these troublesome fancies. I will try to be all that you wish. But I cannot surrender my own will about some things. Shall I find my own gentle Edith again, to-morrow evening?"

The deep love in my heart was now so strongly urging me to give up this contest, and trust my future with Howard, without this promise. But a Power above my own held me to my resolution. As some memories of Aunt Emma's story flashed before my mind, I felt again that I must be firm and decided.

It was evident that Howard did not intend to yield to my wishes this evening. Would he ever do so? Yes, I still felt sure that he would, when he had given himself time for reflection.

My own Howard would, I knew! But Howard was not himself to-night.

But wishing to give him a clear understanding of the position I had taken, I replied to his question by asking,—

"Do you, then, refuse to give me any pledge of what I wish so much?"

"Well,—I cannot bind myself at all in this matter."

"Then, Howard, my best-loved friend, you compel me to say this to you:—Do not come to me again until you can come prepared to give to me this pledge of safety in our married home."

His face was very pale and stern as he took my hand for the evening good-bye. But his voice trembled as he said,—

"I trust that this is not, or will not prove to be, your final decision, Edith. I know that this does not come from your heart. But when that comes to be aroused by memories of our happy love, you will send to me a word calling me back to you without any conditions. I will gladly return at the slightest summons."

And he was gone!

When his quick, firm step could no longer be heard upon the gravel path, my own strength gave way, and I sank down in grief and fear.

Oh! could it be possible that the dear, familiar footstep would never return to make my heart glad again? Have I sent from me forever my dearest friend? The only one I claim as all my own? Oh, no! it cannot be! Howard's better mind will prevail over all else. He will see that my request is reasonable and best for us both. He will come to-morrow evening to join with me in my resolve, and all will be bright again. So I comforted myself for a time.

XII.

Sustained in the Crucible.

"He that purifies the heart
With grief—will lend it strength."

—*Hemans.*

THE next evening came and passed away, but Howard Fielding did not return. Then came my hardest conflict. In the morning I must leave Weston. Could I go without seeing Howard again?

I had not thought it possible that my decision would break our friendship. Could I bear to have it so? Could I give up all our united anticipations? Could I live on alone without the loving care I had thought so sure would be mine?

I was growing very weak. I was too exhausted in mind, too bewildered in spirit, to battle alone with my trials! God—and Heaven—and faith seemed far away from me! At last, late in the evening, I went to Aunt Emma. She led me up into her little Bethel

room. Drawing me close to her side and soothing me with gentle caresses, she listened as I told her how it was now between Howard and myself.

"My poor darling! Your trial has come sooner than I thought. I knew it must come some time, for I have known, as you have not, that Howard was going into dangerous paths. Remembering my own girlhood confidence I refrained from speaking until I could tell you my own story. I have prayed much for you, dear Edith, that God would help you to do whatever was best for Howard and yourself.

"Do not blame yourself for being so decided. It surely was necessary to remain firm. If Howard had not felt some self-reproach he would not have withstood your pleading. It was not like him to meet loving solicitude in the way he did last evening.

"I have an assurance that is as dear to me now as a sunbeam that this time of trial will result in a blessing to Howard. You are not suffering in vain. Woman must be willing to suffer for those she loves.

"Howard Fielding possesses every element of the noblest manhood. I cannot doubt his love for you, and I believe that he will after a time give to you the pledge that you require. Even

if he refuses to do so now and leaves you to go your own lonely path, I believe he will surely see his mistake and perhaps become all that your highest wishes would ask for him. Do not grieve so, my darling child! Even if your fears should prove a reality, and you find that you must give up Howard and the fond hopes you have cherished, it had better be now than in future years when all is lost in his ruined manhood!

"Do not be frightened, my darling, by any vision of lonely years your loving heart may now have, for you will never be all alone. You have been looking to God to direct you. He has led you into a severe trial, but our Great Refiner never places a soul in His crucible and leaves it to endure the fiery testing alone! He is certainly watching over you now! Yes, and bearing your sorrow and you in His strong, loving hand!

"Do you not remember those words in reference to our Saviour? —

"'He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.' And, —

"'He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver.'

"How patiently He waits until His own image is reflected in the purified soul! We must not

resist His will nor His process. Give yourself fully into His care, my dear Edith. God helped you in your sad interview with Howard, and He will be your same help and comfort always! He says Himself, 'I will never leave nor forsake thee.'"

Aunt Emma then knelt by my side in prayer. In a faith that made the Divine Presence a reality, she took me to the feet of Infinite Love. With earnest pleading she asked that I might be taken into and kept, "Beneath the shadow of His wings," through all trials that awaited me. Even while she was asking, the blessing came. The same voice that reassured the disciples upon the sea of Galilee, now quieted and comforted my heart in the same words, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."

There came to me a new feeling of being in God's presence, and of His loving care for me! With this comforting I could trust all things in His hands, though I had to go away from Weston without again seeing Howard, or receiving one word from him.

For many months after I returned to my school, I watched and hoped for some token of remembrance from my promised husband. None ever came.

I thought Howard Fielding loved me so truly! How could he so readily give me up? And for such a cause?

This was my last term at school. It had been arranged that soon after I graduated Howard would take me to his home as his bride. If he utterly refused to grant to me that which I felt more than ever was a pledge of home security, what was my prospect in life? A lonely, darkened path!

As months passed on, and it was becoming a certainty that Howard did not intend to yield to my wishes, my own heart plead hard to give up my resolution and write the word to Howard that I knew would speedily recall him to my side. But in the light of what God had taught me, I did not dare to invite Howard to return until he would come to stand with me upon the same foundation for home and happiness.

Almost a year had passed since we parted. A year of entire silence between us! I was now sure that Howard was lost to me! Again I was plunged into a severe soul conflict and suffering. How can heart-ties be broken without suffering? Again Heaven sent comfort to me through my dear Aunt Emma.

"This is a sore trial to me also, my dear

Edith. I did believe Howard was too noble to allow this permanent estrangement, and I hoped to keep you near to myself as the wife of Howard.

"We must not look backward, but ever onward and upward! In the blessed future life we shall understand, as we cannot now, why our hearts need to suffer so much! My dear, let me urge you to *hold fast* upon the *anchor* to the *soul*, your *hope* and *trust* in *God*. Take this, one of His promises, and treasure it up in your heart, —

"'Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.'

"And, my darling Edith, let this be your joy, your refuge, and your watchword, 'Jesus only!'"

And so it was! I was sustained, comforted, and strengthened, until gradually I could think of Howard Fielding and our banished dream of love, with a quiet sadness.

If I had not found a hiding place and a refuge in an Almighty Saviour and He had not become an abiding reality to my soul, I never could have borne the withering of my blighted joy, and my only love on earth!

My school-days closed and I had to decide what I would do in the future. I should never marry and have a home of my own. I had loved Howard Fielding, I loved him still, too purely, too truly! I could never give my hand to another!

But there was work to be done, work for the suffering, the poor, the ignorant. I would devote my life to that work.

About the time that I graduated, I became acquainted with a missionary family just going out to their field of labor in India. Through this family the way opened for me to enter upon the work to which I had given myself. I made hasty preparations to go with them.

A year and a half after I left Weston, I returned for my last visit with Aunt Emma.

I had learned that Howard Fielding had finished his medical studies, and was established in a distant town.

My own heart had become quiet; but the love for Howard was still there! A hidden treasure that would live and be comforted through my earnest prayers to Heaven for his best welfare and happiness.

I found little change in the home except that my aunt was more pale and spiritual, and my uncle more given up to his fearful habits. My

aunt still believed that some time he would return to himself and to his family.

It was a sad trial to leave my noble aunt so alone. But she gave me her blessing with her farewell kiss.

"You know now, darling, that you and I will never be all alone! One who can comfort, and who has All-Power, will never leave us!"

XIII.

Howard Fielding.

"It is that He my sacrifice hath blessed
With a deep, chastening sense, that all at last is well."
—*Hemans.*

IT is not my intention in this record to enter into the particulars of my life in India. My work there was a quiet, unostentatious one, among the women in that heathen land.

I remained for many years in the family with whom I left America. Our station was in a village among the hills. A luxuriant grove shaded our home, and flowers of rare beauty flourished in profusion.

Ah! how unlike they all were,—the trees, the flowers, and the hills,—from those of my own native land! This very strangeness was better for my heart rest. No touch, or link of old associations, could awaken memories to give pain. I let the old life hide away, though not forgotten. That could never be! The memory

was laid away tenderly, as something to be cherished ever within the heart-casket.

With that promise of God still laid upon my soul,—"Fear thou not, for I will help thee!" —I began my life in India. Soon I gathered about me the sad-eyed women. My heart became engrossed in telling, "The wonderful words of Life" to those who never before had heard of Jesus and His redeeming love.

In this pleasant employment the years fled rapidly away.

Letters from Aunt Emma and Cousin Idnella came to me after long intervals, but always cheering me with their sympathy and love.

As the years went by, there was no change for the better, and no prospect of Idnella's return to her New England home. She understood it all now. After a time she was married to a young minister, and went to a home of her own. She described to me, in her own glowing words, the new happiness she had found, telling me something about her husband, and charming home.

Aunt Emma wrote,—

"I am so thankful that my sensitive darling is so happily sheltered in the love of one like Mr. Alerton. I have prayed much that Idnella might be spared from such

trials as yours, for she could not have borne them."

Ah! mother-heart, even your pure vision could not see to the end.

I had been ten years in India, when I was startled by the coming of a letter, directed in the unforgotten hand-writing of Howard Fielding.

It was opened in haste.

"OAKLAND FORT, PACIFIC COAST, Sept. 14th.

"MISS EDITH ASHTON,

"*My Dear Friend*,—Yes, I call you mine, by the right of the love that has never left my heart! I know there is no wrong in my doing so, for it is but a little time since I was told that you still retained your love for me.

"A short time previous to coming here, I went to Weston. I called to see your Aunt Heyward. This was the first time I had been to your home since our last interview.

"Your aunt told me all. What you suffered, and how you triumphed! Clinging to God in your sorrow, but giving your life-service for the good of others. My noble Edith! Mine, though lost for this life!

"I write now, my best friend, in the hope of making some amends to you for the wrong I have done. Yes, I wronged you deeply; and wronged myself still more through my obstinate wilfulness.

"I wish to give you the comfort now of knowing that your sacrifice for principle has not been in vain.

"You will see this as I tell my story to you. Let me go back to the evening of our sad parting. I always wonder as I think of your calm, though tearful firmness, and my own irritation. Oh! if time could retrieve its steps through the avenue of years, and take us back to that long-ago evening; would I decide differently? Yes, now. But then, in asserting man's dominant will, I resolved not to give you the promise you asked of me. In doing so, how impossible it was for me to think that I might lose you. I thought I understood your gentle nature, and knowing that you loved me, I could only expect that you would yield to me about the pledge.

"If your solicitude for me had been a needless one, I never could have refused your pleading. I was not conscious myself where I was then standing, but your unexpected request awakened some recollections, and stirred up some evil within me to oppose and deny you.

"My best friend, I will tell you now, that I had indeed,—at that very time,—stept into the way where one rarely stops of himself, when he is fully upon its treacherous smoothness.

"I became convinced of this when I returned to meet my convivial classmates. I found that I had a stronger craving and love for stimulants than I had thought. I would soon have been gliding uncon-

sciously down the slippery path to a drunkard's doom, if your small hand and loving voice had not arrested my course.

"I knew, then, that you were right in your demand; my best feelings prompted me to write and tell you so. But I was not then prepared to give up, in anything, man's claim to dictate his own actions.

"Oh! why do men and women so often compel a 'need-be' for God's testing furnace and refining crucible?

"When you left Weston without sending a word to me, I was irritated and troubled. I resolved to wait until you did write before you should hear from me. I concluded that when we met in Weston, at our next vacation, you would then welcome me without any conditions.

"I was not sorry when my medical course was over, and I went to Langdon. My mind was troubled whenever I thought of my unkindness to you; and I plunged into the duties my profession with ceaseless vigor.

"I still anticipated meeting you in Weston, when I expected that all would be made right again between us. I was delayed in getting away from my patients. When I did reach Weston, how great was my astonishment to learn that you had just sailed for India!

"My gentle, timid, little Edith, gone as a teacher to that strange, far-off land! And I meant to shield her so tenderly in a home of our own!

"Do not indulge one regret now that you did take that brave-hearted course. It has been one of the pure memories that has kept me from ruin.

"I did not then come to Weston with any intention of giving to you the promise you wished. On the contrary, I expected to be able to persuade you to let it all go. If you had yielded to me, the result, do doubt, would have been disastrous to both of us. It is a sad experience in life, — that what the influence of the plighted one fails to do, the wedded life can rarely accomplish. I refused my Edith then, and probably would not have yielded to her after our marriage. But your firm stand for what was right and reasonable, and your giving up the hopes that I know were dear to you, raised a beacon light that has kept me from becoming the lost man I would have made of myself.

"It was only after such years of bitter trial as men do not often endure, that I reached safety and rest.

"Among my patients in Langdon was General Wilson. He was a confirmed invalid, but a very social old man. Taking a fancy to me, he often detained me to take dinner or tea with him.

"Among the essential necessaries of life to him, he thought, were wine and brandy; and they were daily upon his table. Often he insisted that I should take a glass with him. Occasionally I yielded.

"When I returned from Weston, I threw away all scruples for awhile, and became reckless of all conse-

quences. I had lost my intended wife, — my Edith, — my only loved one, and through my own folly.

"For a time I cared not what became of me! I was even tempted to arraign the justice of God, in thus thwarting my earthly plans.

"Then I never refused to drink with the General; and when his daughter, the gay Helen Wilson, challenged me in a glass of wine or brandy it was readily accepted.

"In six months from the time that I knew Edith was lost to me, I married Helen Wilson, and our home was with her father.

"I would have been swept down then to utter destruction by the influences surrounding me, had not memories of your pure womanhood come again to arrest and save me.

"Yes, it is true! When I raised the glass to my lips, there came memoirs of your pale, tearful face, and warning voice, haunting me with their sad pleading.

"I had learned that my boasted self-control was powerless. Several times I had been carried to my office intoxicated. At last, one day, I dashed the glass away from me, and in my own mind took the pledge you asked me to give to you. From that time nothing that could stimulate has passed my lips.

"My wife was an accomplished woman, and I was proud of her; but a few years of married life disclosed to me the fact that she was falling into the habitual use of stimulants, even to intoxication. Not

only this, but it was becoming a thing of public observation. Again and again, upon her return home, after a round of calls upon her fashionable acquaintances, the coachman would be obliged to carry her into the house in a drunken stupor.

"Oh! in that time of my darkening home, how gladly would I have given the strongest pledges of total abstinence! In that time, too, you, — my Edith, — were nobly vindicated in your decision.

"I pleaded with my wife to give up the habit that was disgracing our home, and unfitting her for the duties of wife and mother, but she only laughed at my pleading, and derided my remonstrances.

"'Do you think that I have been using these things all my life, and can now give them up at your dictation? Your own record is not a stainless one, and if you imagine, Doctor Fielding, that your lecturing me will do any good, you will find yourself mistaken.'

"I was as helpless and humiliated, in my desolate home, as many a delicate woman is when the demon of intemperance gains control in the home.

"As far as was in my power, I kept all spirits away from Helen. Even the door of my office was always locked. But one day, I received so urgent a summons that this precaution was forgotten. When I returned, after a few hours absence, my wife was intoxicated, and my only child, — a bright loving boy of six years, — was sinking into death. His mother had given to him a dangerous narcotic.

"Of my own feelings I must say but little. He, my boy, was my all of earth! My parents were both dead. My first bright hopes withered in losing Edith. The brilliant woman that I married had made herself too low to even claim respect, and my boy was the only sunbeam in my dark path!

"I had never prayed; but as I knelt by the coffined form of my darling, I felt such a need of help and comfort beyond anything of earth, that I did cry out to God as a soul can only call in its agony.

"No one ever goes with faith to God in vain; and since then He has been my strong, unfailing Helper!

"Langdon had become so sad a place to me that I decided to leave. I secured a position as army surgeon, and was to be sent to the Pacific coast. I had a hope that this change might have a good effect upon my unfortunate wife, but just as we were leaving Langdon she died from the effects of drinking, and was laid beside our boy and her father.

"I came out here alone. I am the surgeon, but I officiate as chaplain when needed. I find many noble young men, — the sons of loving households. They come into the army with a high ambition, but temptations assail them in every form, and too many of them will go to ruin, destroying their own and the fond hopes of their friends. I am giving the energy of my whole being to the work of aiding and saving them, with God's blessing.

"And now, my dear friend, will you accept of this, and think of me as your true friend still? Yes, — after all of these years of suffering and of silence between us, — I want to assure you, once more, how truly I love you! But I do not write this in any hope of our meeting again in this life. If my work was not with the army, and on this far-away frontier, I would indulge some hope that our lives might yet become united. Such a hope I dare not cherish now, but all that is best in our love will outlive the changes of this life. In our Father's 'many mansions' we will meet again, in the presence of our Saviour-God!

"Until then, farewell, my best friend!

"HOWARD FIELDING."

What this letter was to me only God could know. It was joy to receive from Howard such words, and to feel that I was not forgotten, and to learn that my Howard was a noble, Christian man. The present joy cancelled all my past sufferings. What did it matter if earthly hopes had early withered? The Heavenly hopes were made all the brighter!

Through this letter new strength was given to aid me in my work.

I loved my work. It was a joy to see the dull eye lighten as the wronged women began to comprehend the truth, — That there was a

Being who made them, loved them, died for them, and lived for them.

Many gathered about me who learned to believe in the Saviour. I was content to spend my life leading these souls to Christ, but at length my health failed. Physicians urged me to resign my work into the hands of others, and I turned reluctantly away from India.

XIV.

At the Old Home.

"How all comes back! scene after scene—
The old life o'er me throngs!"

OH! home of my early life! How welcome is your quiet shelter, after so many years spent in a foreign land! To the happy home where Aunt Emma Heyward and Cousin Idnella once lived, I turned again for rest. True, they were not there, but everything vividly reminded me of their kindness and love.

The farm had passed into the possession of strangers, but the right of a home was reserved for me; and for Idnella should she come to claim it.

The ample rooms reserved for us still retained their familiar furniture and adornment, and the mansion stood grandly the same, though the storms of more than twenty years had beaten about its walls, and extinguished the home lights one after another since we all gathered there.

The June air was laden with the perfume of the same variety of flowers as in those far-off years, when loved ones sat with me beneath those stately old poplars.

The outlook from the trellised seat by the door was the same. Green fields near by, farm-houses upon the hill-sides, the village in the valley, the glimpse of the river, the wood-crowned hills, and the mountain beyond, — all were unchanged.

As I watched the fading light, I seemed no longer alone, weary, and growing old, but again I was a young, glad-hearted girl, watching the golden sunset, with Cousin Idnella beside me! The twilight deepened; the hush of evening fell around me, and the dream was dispelled.

Again, in the chamber, sitting by the west window, alone, I thought of the past. But did I regret my decision, made long ago, in that room, — the decision that left me a lonely woman, without home and family ties? No, surely not! No one ever regretted placing his hand within God's hand, and following His leading. I have no regrets, for I know that my Father in Heaven has guided all my steps; and He doeth all things well.

I know not whether Howard Fielding is still working for the Master upon earth, but I do know that when we shall stand by the side of

the "River of Life, that flows from the throne of God," we shall see that our earthly path was marked out by the best Love.

One day I opened an old cabinet, and found diaries, letters, and other papers, which told me of the life of my aunt after I went to India. Here, too, I gathered the history of Cousin Idnella's life in California.

My darling sister-cousin! As I think of the dark cloud that came over her happy girlhood, and the strange sorrows of her later life, the question springs to my lips,—

"Why? Oh, why?"

And the only answer is,—

"*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*"

XV.

Idnella Heyward.

"There is a something, yet I scarce know what,—
A something that my longing soul would gain."

QUINCE is a pretty place, and it is very pleasant in my uncle's home. Uncle and aunt are very kind; but, mother dear, this is not home. Oh! when may I come back to you, and to my own home?"

This was in a letter from Idnella Heyward, when she had been two years in California. There could not be a heart more fondly attached to friends and home than Idnella's, and the strange sorrow that early in life made her an exile was ever a depressing memory, casting a shade in retrospect over all of her after life, and which, in her happiest letters, she could not conceal. There ever seemed an unusual, unsatisfied yearning for mother, home, and love. Yet, her presence was joy-giving to others. Her

Uncle Dudley wrote of her,—"Idnella is always pleasant, always winning, and we love her."

As the niece of Judge Dudley, many friends gathered about her in the new home.

Just before the sad parting, her mother said,—

"My precious child, will you give me a promise, and keep it true?"

"Yes, dear mother, I will!"

"Then I want you to promise to meet me in prayer, every night, if possible, when the sun is setting. If circumstances sometimes prevent you from doing that, always think of me as praying then for you,—that God will make you truly His child, and that if we never meet in this life again, we may be sure to meet in Heaven. Do you promise, my darling?"

The young heart was too deeply affected to allow Idnella to speak; but a kiss, and a tight clasping of arms about her neck, gave to the mother the promise she sought.

Never did Idnella enjoy her favorite hour, in watching the golden sun set over the Pacific coast without remembering that her loving mother was at that moment praying for her. These prayers led her to God.

As Idnella stood, with others, to unite with the church, there came to her mind, for the first time, some questionings as to the truth of

her early teachings. She was sprinkled in infancy. She had read so often, in the Bible, — "Believe, and be baptized," that at this moment she felt she ought to receive baptism then. She had an unsatisfied feeling, that with her something was left out in that hour of solemn consecration. Idnella remembered that her mother believed this to be the right way, and for the time she felt that it must be so.

Four years after Idnella Heyward came to Quince, she had become strongly attached to the church, felt at home, and was beloved by all her new friends. But the blessed Refiner saw it best that her young heart should early in life be placed in a crucible of giving up friends.

There had been only one church in Quince, but there came into the place a minister of another denomination. The views of this man were so different upon some points from the prevailing ones among Mr. Norton's people, that he felt called upon to warn his hearers against being led astray. To establish his own church more securely in the truth, he commenced preaching doctrinal sermons, one every Sabbath morning.

When he came to speak upon "Baptism," no one listened so intently as did Idnella Heyward.

There had been times when those former questionings had troubled her. Now she watched eagerly to hear her pastor tell where the passages in the Bible could be found that taught the baptism of infants. She was sure they must be somewhere in the Bible, yet she had never been able to find them.

Her pastor did not help her. He never quoted any passage, nor referred to any, in the Bible, where infant baptism was taught. He only inferred some things in certain places, but he had much to say about what "The Fathers of the early churches" wrote.

This did not satisfy Idnella's now thoroughly awakened mind.

"Oh! I want to know! I must know what God says about this in the Bible!"

This was only said to herself. She felt truly that no one about her would give her any sympathy. Indeed, she too often heard the remark, "How plain Mr. Norton makes it all!" to allow her to speak of her own doubts.

Then, too, her Uncle Dudley had very decidedly warned his family against giving the least heed to "what those ranting Baptists said."

Idnella revered and loved her uncle; yet she was not a little afraid of him, and never could

have said to him, nor to her aunt, "Perhaps those Baptists are right in some things." However, this became her secret feeling.

Idnella could but believe, as she examined her Bible, that immersion was taught there, and that Jesus Himself was immersed. She had always thought that sprinkling, too, was taught in the Bible, but her pastor's own discourses dispelled that idea from her mind, and she was compelled to believe that she had not been baptised.

She became sad and anxious, for what was she to do? In this trouble she was all alone. How could she write of this to her mother? Would it not grieve that loving mother, to learn that her daughter was discarding her own teaching and example?

Alone in her room Idnella wept and prayed. Yes, she could go to God with this trouble, though He was to her then, as a Friend, very far off; but the Good Shepherd was watching this lamb of His fold, and gave her strength to stand decided according to her conviction of what was her duty.

At length Idnella began to feel that if she was not baptised she had no right to the ordinances of the church, and when the next communion Sabbath came, she returned immediately

home, and alone in her room tried to prepare herself for the questions she knew would be asked.

It was the custom in her uncle's family for all to meet in the parlor and spend some time after church service in singing, but this Sabbath evening Judge Dudley did not open his organ, but called Idnella to meet him alone in the parlor.

"Well, my dear, you did not remain to the Lord's Supper to-day. Are you sick?"

"No, Uncle, I am well."

"Why, then, did you come home?"

"I felt that I ought not to stay."

"Why, Idnella?"

"Well, Uncle, I don't think I have been baptised, and so have no right to be in the church."

"My dear child, what is the meaning of this? Have you been to the Baptist meetings and heard those people talk?"

"Oh! no, Uncle; I have not been there. You forbade our going, you know."

"Well, you have been reading some of their writings, then."

"No, I have read nothing but the Bible, and I have never heard anything upon this subject, only what Mr. Norton said."

"Mr. Norton! Why, he explained it all perfectly plain."

"He only made it plain to me that I have never been baptised."

"Well, we will have him come here and make it plain to you that you have been baptised. I am certain he can do it."

XVI.

"What is Truth?"

THE Rev. Mr. Norton was a veritable son of New England. With an eagle eye that sixty years had not dimmed; he was tall, angular in form, stern at times, but with warm affections hidden behind his distant exterior. When he laid aside his ministerial dignity he was a social and interesting companion.

He was one of the pioneers in California, and the church in Quince had grown up under his own ministrations. Every member was as one of his family, and he watched for their good with constant care. With the strange elements that flooded California, it was no easy task to guard them from all danger.

As his church was the first one established, Mr. Norton claimed that he held the exclusive right to the whole field. When a man came preaching Baptist views, Mr. Norton considered it his bounden duty to warn his people against

him, and to instruct them thoroughly in the doctrines of their own church. This led him to give the discourses upon Baptism. In doing this he not only explained more fully their own views, but he undertook to state and refute those held by the Baptists. In the decided ground he took in opposition to them, he went so far as to say that he did not believe that there was one case of immersion in the Bible, nor one proof that this mode of baptism was required.

Most of Mr. Norton's confiding hearers accepted his statements as the truth, without making any research for themselves.

Idnella had read her Bible only upon this subject, so her mind was not bewildered by the conflicting opinions of men.

The family of Judge Dudley always welcomed the visits of the minister. When the Judge told Mr. Norton of Idnella's state of mind his reply was, —

"Well, well, we must bring her out of that! Of all my flock, I cannot have your niece taken from us in such a way!"

With this feeling strong upon his heart, Mr. Norton called to see Idnella.

His manner was very kind as he clasped her hand in greeting, —

"Well, my young friend, how is it that we did not see you at our last communion service?"

"I thought I better not remain, Mr. Norton."

"Why?"

"I felt that I had never been baptised."

"How is that? Were you not baptised in infancy?"

"I was sprinkled, but the Bible says, 'Believe and be baptised.' Will you baptise me, Mr. Norton?"

The request came so unexpectedly to the good man that he must be pardoned for so forgetting his usual dignity as to spring suddenly from his chair, and remain some moments standing in silent astonishment.

At length the thought came to him that after all of his efforts, his young people were not so well instructed in the doctrines of the church as they ought to be, and this was all that Idnella needed to settle her misgivings. He again seated himself and said, —

"My dear child, you do not understand all about this. Let me explain it to you. You have read the Bible so much you must remember what it says in Ephesians, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' You must see that there is only one baptism. You have been baptised, and that is sufficient."

"But Mr. Norton, I do not think that sprinkling babies, — nor any one, — is the baptism of the Bible."

"Well, I tell you that it is so! I understand the Greek text, and have studied the Bible so long, can you not believe me and take my word for it?"

There was some asperity in his voice as Mr. Norton said this. He evidently saw it himself, for he added, more gently, —

"The mode in which water is applied in baptism is of little consequence. The true, essential baptism is that of the Holy Spirit."

In a quiet tone, as if hurt or bewildered, Idnella replied, —

"Mr. Norton, I do not feel that I have received that baptism either. Our Saviour tells us to follow Him. He went down into the water and was baptised. I want to follow His example."

The Pastor was sorely perplexed as to how to influence this sensitive young heart. At last he said, —

"I am very sorry you have allowed those Baptists to trouble you so! Can you not trust your own Pastor to teach and direct you? I know as much about these things as they do. Will you not give this all up and permit me to tell you what is truth?"

"But, Mr. Norton, no one has talked to me about this. I am not acquainted with one of the Baptist people. I have never heard them talk and have had none of their writings. It was your sermons that led me to feel as I do."

"My sermons!" exclaimed Mr. Norton, once more surprised into undignified excitement. "My sermons! Why, I thought I made everything so clear that all could understand. What was in my sermons to trouble you?"

"Mr. Norton, always, when I read about Jesus going down into the water and being baptised, I could not help believing that He was immersed, but as all of my friends said that sprinkling was baptism too, I did suppose there must be some place in the Bible where it said so. I expected you would tell us where to find those passages. You only told us what the Fathers said. I wanted to know what God said. He does tell us plainly, 'Believe and be baptised,' and I want to do that which seems most like obeying His command."

Mr. Norton saw that it was useless for him to prolong any argument with one who trusted so in the teachings of the Bible. He must give up his young charge, but in his disappointment and chagrin, he could ill conceal his irritation,

and his fatherly attitude changed to that of a judge,—

"Well, Idnella, do you understand that the position you now take will exclude you from our sympathy and fellowship? The members of our church must not absent themselves from its ordinances, nor make themselves mentors upon its accepted doctrines. We all wish to retain you with us, but if you remain in your present state of mind you must leave us!"

XVII.

"Follow Thou Me."

IDNELLA HEYWARD had indeed not understood the usages of her church, nor the result of her questionings. While seeking to obtain only the truth, she had cherished a vague idea that she would be permitted to receive the baptism she wished for and still remain in her own church and among old friends. Mr. Norton had effectually destroyed that hope.

Idnella knew now where she stood; she must give up what she considered to be the truth, or she must relinquish the church associations of her whole life!

Neither could she claim the sympathy she needed from her loving mother, for she did not know but her mother disapproved her position, as did her Quince friends.

She knew nothing about the Baptist people, nor what step she must take to follow Christ,

if she remained firm to her convictions of duty.

There was then a most severe struggle before her young, loving heart could voluntarily turn away from all that was dear and familiar of sacred associations, to strangers and that which was unknown. She felt she must stand for the truth as God had taught it to her, and follow her Saviour. Yes, He had called her to do this, and He was helping her more than she knew. He was leading His lonely, sorrowful child into a way that would end beside the still waters of His presence.

Even now Idnella was having the prayers and loving sympathy she craved, but did not seek for. After Mr. Norton's fruitless interview, Idnella's uncle wrote to her mother, giving an account of the affair.

Her reply was,—

"Do not let this trouble you, my brother. When I sent my precious daughter from me, I put her into God's care. My first, my greatest desire for Idnella, has been that she should become a true Christian. You and I believe that she is one, and if God is leading her into a different path from our own, we must allow it without opposition. We can all be one in Christ Jesus."

Mrs. Heyward gave her darling again into the Saviour's keeping, and Idnella, alone with her Bible and prayer, was receiving new light and strength.

One pleasant Sabbath morning she decided to try and find the place where the few Baptists in Quince met for their church service. It was in a hall, quite a distance from her own home. The audience was small and unpretending. The minister was a white-headed old man, but his voice rang out in clarion tones, the words of the Saviour, —

"*What is that to thee? Follow thou me!*"

He dwelt in earnest, tender exhortation upon the theme, "Follow Christ." Idnella felt that this was another message from the Saviour to herself, and that she must take up the cross of choosing this people, and this lowly place, to be her people and her church.

As memory came afresh of all that she must surrender in leaving her own church and friends, the flood-gate of tears burst forth and would not be restrained.

She remained with her head bowed upon the seat before her as the services closed and the people went away.

A gentle hand was laid upon her arm, and a low voice said, —

"Is your grief something that our Saviour cannot soothe?"

This suggestive question proved a quieting balm; the tears ceased to fall, and a hush of peace fell upon Idnella's heart. As soon as she could, she looked up at her questioner. A pleasant face met her glance, and the question was repeated, —

"Can you not trust our Almighty Saviour in your trouble?"

When Idnella could keep the tears from her voice, she replied, —

"The Saviour is mine, dear lady, and I want to follow Him. I do not quite know how, just yet."

"Will you come with me to my home until the afternoon service? If you are in doubt as to any duty perhaps we may be able to help you. The followers of Jesus must aid each other, you know."

This was said in such a motherly kindness, that Idnella held out her hand in confidence to the gentle stranger and accepted her invitation.

As they passed out of the hall-door, a young man came to the side of the lady. She turned to Idnella and said, —

"I am Mrs. Grafton, and this is my son."

Idnella looked up and met a face like that of the mother. The smile with which he gave his hand in greeting, won her confidence as his mother's had done, and won her heart too, as no smile had ever done before. Of this, however, she was wholly unconscious. She accompanied them with the peaceful feeling that she had met Christian friends who could understand and advise her. This hope was realized, for Mrs. Grafton and her son explained to Idnella all that she wished to know, and then commended her to the Saviour's care in earnest prayer.

When the afternoon service was over Idnella returned to her home in a quiet joy.

In the evening she was alone in the library when Loren Belden came in search of her. He was a nephew of Mrs. Dudley's, and was in the office of the Judge and a member of the family. He was a young man of talent. Judge Dudley secretly hoped that Idnella might become the wife of this promising young lawyer, and the young man himself had entertained similar thoughts.

Since coming to California, Loren Belden had allowed himself to be swayed by influences very different from those in his New England home. Coming in contact with the so-called "modern

philosophy," and imbibing its cold stoicism, he had drifted into the conclusion that a belief in God and the Bible was only a superstition, and all expressions of regard for friends was a weakness unfitting manhood.

Nevertheless he had come to love Idnella Heyward as much as he was capable of loving any one. His pet philosophy had prevented him from making it known.

Before her trouble about baptism began, Idnella had become much as she used to be in happy childhood. To Loren Belden there was no music so sweet as her voice in singing, and her ringing laugh. He meant to have all this to himself some time. When he was ready it was his intention to ask her to become his wife.

He chanced to see Idnella as she was walking with Mrs. Grafton and her son that Sabbath afternoon, and it startled him out of his stoicism so much that he decided to have a word with Idnella at once. He came to her in the library and said, —

"Idnella, will you walk out with me? I saw some nice flowers by the Altalpa grove."

"Please excuse me to-day, Loren. I will go to-morrow."

"And why not to-day?"

"Why, it is the Sabbath."

"And will it be more of a sin to walk out with me than it was to go with Edward Grafton?"

After a moment of startled surprise, Idnella replied, quietly,—

"Why, Loren, I was only walking to church with Mr. Grafton and his mother. I never saw them until to-day."

"I hope you will never see them again. They are not fit associates for you.

"I have never told you so, Idnella, but I hope that sometime you will be my wife. I wish you would put away all this worry you are in about church doctrines. What does it all amount to, anyway? It only makes you sad and the home gloomy. Why, I have not heard you sing for a month, nor laugh, either. What is the use of all this?"

"Because I cannot be satisfied without knowing the truth about things."

"Well, that is just what I want to do; but I go to the rocks, and to scientific facts, instead of going to that Mosaic blunder, and the rest of those fables. If you would allow me to read to you about science and geology, as I wish to, you would not be in such a fog about things as you now are."

In the silence with which Idnella listened to

his carelessly spoken words, there was a quivering of her heart, which Loren Belden would never know. Though he had never spoken of his love, she knew something about it by intuition, and in her own heart was a growing response to his regard, but his words crushed the young tendrils of affection so completely, that nothing could revive them again.

Idnella did not speak until she could do so calmly.

"Loren, I am so grieved to hear you talk in this way! I, too, have studied, as you know, and I am certain there is nothing in true science, or in geology, against the Bible or God. I am in no fog as regards the Bible. It is only what men have said that has troubled me. You speak of a hope you have cherished. Do not allow yourself to hope any longer, for I can never be the wife of any man who rejects the Bible and disbelieves in God."

The irritation Loren felt when he saw Idnella with the Graftons, was still upon him during this conversation, giving to his manner and voice an ungentle rasping, natural to him, but never used toward Idnella before. Her quiet opposition to all his wishes completed the overthrow of his boasted self-control, and he said, hastily,—

"Perhaps you will accept of Edward Grafton,

then, the young Baptist priest; they say he is in pursuit of a wife, and most likely this is the whole secret of your dissatisfaction with your own church and friends."

To this cruel taunt Idnella would make no reply, but hastened away to her own room.

Could it be possible, she thought, that others beside Loren would ascribe such motives to her? Since Loren had flung out such a suggestion, she dared not go to meet Mrs. Grafton at the little gathering of Baptists, as she promised to do, and certainly could not go to Mrs. Grafton's home again for advice. The short interview with them, and their gentle sympathy, had made them seem like friends, and she had anticipated meeting them again as a bright spot in her lonely life. After Loren's ungenerous remark, her womanly delicacy would not permit her to go to the home of Edward Grafton, nor, indeed, to the Baptist meeting.

Mrs. Grafton and her son wondered that they did not again see the earnest young enquirer, but they did not forget her.

XVIII.

A Rest.

THE mental strain upon Idnella Heyward for so many months, was evidently affecting her health. There was a consultation with her mother and a physician, and again it was decided that she must have a change.

In the upper valley of Sonoma, the widow of an army officer had a private school for young ladies, and to this place, the following June, Judge Dudley carried his niece.

Mrs. Mayo was a gentle, motherly woman, and her school small and select. The large house, and extensive grounds filled with flowers, shrubbery, and trees, seemed to shut them away in a little world of their own. The seclusion from excitement, and the quiet routine of study, were a welcome change to Idnella. The out-door recreation and rambles in the park soothed and strengthened again the overwrought nerves.

Idnella soon found that Mrs. Mayo was a Baptist, and her church not far away. At last she

was with those who could help her in taking up her new duties. Before she took a step in that direction, she wrote to her mother of all her trials in the past months. In the reply of her mother, Idnella received a new cordial of joy.

"Do not hesitate, my daughter, to follow the Saviour in all duty that He makes known to you. He, and not your mother, must guide you in this; but you may feel very sure, my darling, that my sympathy and prayers have been given to you in all of your trouble."

With the added blessing of her mother's approbation, Idnella was "buried with Christ in baptism," and united with the church in Alto. Then the Lord placed the seal of His approving smile upon the young soul that had given up so much to obey Him. He gave to her a trusting peace such as she had never felt before. It was His peace that He promises to all who obey Him.

The summer passed in a quiet happiness with Idnella Heyward. In the fall there was a gathering of ministers at Alto. One afternoon, as Idnella entered the church, she saw Edward Grafton standing in a group of ministers. He recognized her at once, and came to her side. The lighting up of his dark eye evinced the truth of his words, as he took her hand.

"This is, indeed, an unexpected pleasure. I am glad to see you again. How is it that I find you in Alto?"

Idnella explained that she was attending Mrs. Mayo's school.

"And how is it now about the question of duty that troubled you last spring?"

"I have been baptized, and united with the church in this place."

"And your mind is at rest now?"

"Yes, Mr. Grafton, I have now no misgivings about my baptism."

"My mother has not forgotten you, Miss Heyward. She will be glad to see you in Pasco. May I not tell her that you will come?"

"Thank you; but I cannot promise. You may tell her that I do not forget her kindness to me that Sabbath."

The father of Edward Grafton was a teacher in a New England seminary, until failing health led him to California. He bought land and made a home in Quince, but his hope of being restored to health was not realized. He died, leaving his wife and daughter in the new home, while his son was yet pursuing his studies in the Theological Seminary in New England.

It had been the earnest wish and intention of Edward Grafton to devote his life to the work

of a foreign missionary. The death of his father left him the only protector and support of his mother and young sister. With his views of a mother's claim upon her son, he felt no hesitation in accepting this as an indication of the Master's will, that he should remain in his native land. For a time there was some prospect that he would settle in Quince, but he had finally located in Pasco, in the Sonoma valley, and in the pleasant parsonage home he had established his mother and sister.

Mrs. Grafton at first objected to this arrangement, thinking that she and Mary had better remain in their own home.

"You will have a wife, sometime, and you better let mother stay in Quince, my son."

"Yes, mother, I hope to find a wife, sometime, but the woman I shall marry will be a loving daughter to you, and our home will be your own home always. Don't think I can ever do without my mother, when I have a wife."

What scene in the earthly life is more to be honored and admired, than the tender care of a son for his mother?

Even the Bible refers to this tie between mother and son, as something peculiarly touching, — "The only son of his mother, and she a widow."

Edward Grafton had never seen the woman he desired for his wife until he met Idnella Heyward. It was, indeed, one of those instances of mutual attraction at the first interview. Their unexpected meeting now was evidently a pleasure to both of them, though, with Idnella, concealed under a very quiet manner. Mr. Grafton did not mean to lose sight of her again, for he soon brought his mother to call upon her, and his own calls became more frequent at Mrs. Mayo's, though he received little to encourage him from Idnella.

Indeed, she was not willing for a long time to listen to her own fluttering heart, though fully conscious that the coming step and voice of Mr. Grafton were becoming most pleasant to hear. The never-forgotten taunt of Loren Belden made Idnella embarrassed and silent in the presence of Edward Grafton. Even his mother and sister found it difficult to win her into the frankness that was most natural to her.

After awhile, however, they persuaded Idnella to visit them in Pasco. There, in the quiet atmosphere of a loving home, her own heart was made quiet, and as she daily noted the tender consideration with which Mr. Grafton cared for his mother and sister, the thought would come, "He will make his wife happy."

When she saw his untiring labor among his people, she began to feel that to unite with him in those labors would be the most pleasant life upon earth.

In the golden days of the California autumn, Edward Grafton won the love of a most loving heart. In the early spring time, Idnella went as his bride to his home in Pasco.

It was not her wish, and so was not thought best, that she should return to Quince at present, but in Mrs. Mayo's parlor, with her Uncle and Aunt Dudley, and her school friends about her, Idnella Heyward took upon herself the vows of a wife.

Never did woman enter upon that new life with a deeper joy, or a more vivid sense of its sacred responsibilities, than did Idnella.

Her letters testify how she loved her new home, the home that was her own. She loved her husband with a love that became idolatry.

Alas! for woman's heart-rest when she loves like that!

XIX.

A New Crucible.

"And the voice that hushed the sea,
Stills her spirit with the whisper,
'Suffer them to come to me.'"

AFTER Idnella went to her own home as the wife of Edward Grafton, she spent five years of deep, quiet happiness.

Idnella proved an efficient helper in her husband's pastoral work. Her keen sensibility and early trials prepared her to meet the varied claims upon the wife of a pastor. Many hearts now gave to her a mother's and a sister's love, and her own heart found a rest in their confidence.

While meeting the duties of the church and general society, her thoughts and affections were centred within her own home-circle. To Mother Grafton she was a loving daughter, to her husband the devoted wife, and to her children the fond mother. There were two of the household darlings, and how the mother cherished those

little ones was seen in every letter written to her old home in Weston. The far-off Grandmother Heyward was cheered amid her own trials, by hearing many things about the wide-awake, loving, little Emma and baby Willie.

Idnella Grafton had faith in God and loved Him as her Saviour, but faith and love became dim as her earthly blessings increased. Her strongest affections twined closer and closer around her husband and children. She loved her Saviour as a Friend in Heaven, — an unknown country, a mysterious, beautiful, but far-off world.

The time was coming when that world would be brought very near to her, and the Saviour would reveal Himself in new and tender relations. The beginning of this new lesson was near, though years would pass before she would fully receive it into her soul. Little Willie had never been a strong baby, but as his second year was closing he seemed in more robust health. At times he was still, too quiet, his dark eyes too full of thought, for babyhood, but his laugh and prattle were heard often, making the home glad and chasing away wearying care from his father's brow.

Suddenly this darling of the home was taken ill, and died after one week of suffering.

Oh! what tears and prayers welled up from the hearts of parents and friends!

How the mother's heart fainted in this new, refining fire! Never before had Idnella watched over the sufferings of one she loved. Never had she seen a dear one die, until her own noble boy was taken. For a time she could not be comforted.

In his last struggle, the darling one called out, "Papa! Mamma!" and was gone!

But where?

This question came to Idnella, as her mother-heart seemed to fly after the little, freed spirit, and again when she gave her last kiss to the sweet, white face, and saw the precious little form laid into the grave; and in the after days, when she missed her babe so sadly, these new questionings haunted the mother continually.

"Where is my darling? That timid little one, ever clinging so closely to his mother's arms, will he not feel alone and afraid in the great company of that world of spirits?

"Oh! Is infant salvation sure? Is it well with my precious child?"

In this time of grief and questioning, no word or opinion of man could satisfy or comfort the mourning mother. Again she went to the Bible and read that only. As she studied

more closely the character, the mission, and the very words of the Divine Saviour, all of her questionings were answered fully, and every doubt dispelled. In Him the bereaved mother was comforted. He gave to her in His Word the assurance that all who die in infancy are saved in Him. His atonement encircles the little ones. His own words are, — "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. I am the Good Shepherd. Let the little ones come unto Me."

How tenderly He takes the lambs of His fold, the cherished treasures of the home-circle, — takes them out of a mother's love into the safe shelter of His own eternal love!

"They die, — for Adam sinned,
They live, — for Jesus died."

XX.

Testing Trials.

"Here we have no continuing city."

THE union between the church in Pasco and their pastor was a pleasant one, and unusually so in some respects. Mr. Grafton's predecessor was a man who cared more for his own will than for the interests of the church, or for the cause of Christ. In various ways he created discord and disunion among the people. When he went away the church was nearly destroyed.

Mr. Grafton gathered the scattered members, uniting them to each other by leading them back to their Saviour. By his own wise and gentle ministrations, the church had become once more a united band of Christians. Their pastor not only found the people kind and affectionate, but also very intelligent, and willing to give him every aid in all service for the Master.

To this people Mr. Grafton had become very strongly attached, and they loved him with a rare confidence. How, then, could he decide to leave them? It was indeed a severe trial, when the necessity was laid upon him.

For some months Mr. Grafton had felt an increasing inability to perform his pastoral duties. He could not understand the cause, but upon consulting physicians he learned that he had heart-disease. They told him it was not yet chronic and its development might be checked, but to do this he must rest and avoid all excitement.

Ah! how was a faithful pastor, who could not preach a sermon without an absorbing interest in his work, to "rest and avoid all excitement"?

Only by giving it all up until it would be safe to resume the work. This was the decision of the physicians and his own judgment, but this involved his giving up the pastorate entirely, and leaving Pasco.

Before he could make this decision known, Mr. Grafton had to pass through a conflict in his study, alone with his Bible and God. It is not always, not often, that the most devoted child of God yields at once in quiet submission to the overthrowing of all his own hopes and

plans. Edward Grafton did not. He loved the work of winning souls to Christ. He loved, with a rare love, the people of his first pastorate. He loved his Divine Master's service in the ministry. Must he be laid aside from all this for a length of time? Or for life?

It was not easy at first to say from the heart, "Thy will be done"; but there came to Mr. Grafton the feeling of entire submission to all the appointments of the Great Refiner.

He then made known to his family and his church the fact that he must relinquish preaching for a while, because his health required him to rest.

Mr. Grafton was most anxious to shield his loving young wife from the knowledge of his true condition, for if it proved to be as the doctors thought, that rest would restore him to health, she need never learn of this danger to his life and to her happiness.

The church was willing to grant Mr. Grafton a long vacation, but that would not meet the requirements of his case. He must give up all care of a church. He must leave Pasco.

When his people were made to understand that this was inevitable, there was universal lamentation. The older members felt they would lose a son and the younger ones a brother, as

well as a pastor, who had led them all onward and upward in the Christian life. It was a sad sundering of ties between church and pastor.

No one felt these trials more keenly than the pastor's wife. Her loving heart was greatly alarmed at the first intimation of any danger to her husband, but he soon reassured her by his own hopeful words, that all he needed was a few months' release from pastoral care and labor. Then her trial centred in leaving Pasco.

The love of home had ever been very strong with Idnella Grafton. The circumstances that sent her away from the home of her childhood prepared her to cling more fondly to her own home, and now this home was full of tender reminiscences of her life as wife and mother. Every part of it had grown into her very heart, How, then, could she leave it forever?

How she clung to that circle of loving friends! Why must the best ties so often be the soonest broken? Ah! is it not through this very process of forming and expanding earth's purest affections, that our broken heart-tendrils become more firmly united to our Saviour-God? Yes, surely, this is the design of this crucible.

There was one other link to hold Idnella Grafton to Pasco. The little grave in the cemetery. Other dear children came to make glad

the parsonage home, but Willie was not forgotten. The solemn admonition, "Keep yourselves from idols," came to the mother-heart when her first-born son was laid in the grave, but was forgotten again, and the home-circle filled her heart and absorbed all her thoughts.

A Heavenly Father's blessing rests in a peculiar manner upon a true, family life. The tender love in such a home always meets with His approbation, but He is not pleased when they are so satisfied in each other and in their earthly home that they forget Him, and the home He is preparing for His own in heaven. This calls for His discipline. He saw a "need be" for chastening sorrow again for Idnella, and called her from the dear parsonage-home in Pasco.

It was arranged that the family should go to the home in Quince, that Mother Grafton still owned, and when all were settled there Mr. Grafton went to visit college-friends in a distant part of California.

His longest visit was with one who was his room-mate in college. Though very unlike, there had been a close friendship between them at Yale. James Hamilton was active and wide-awake, but never made high attainments, except in the scientific department. In this he con-

sidered himself an adept. He was now proprietor of an extensive ranch,—a bustling, busy man, but still giving some attention to his favorite investigations into science.

Mr. Hamilton once visited his friend in Pasco, and now he gave Mr. Grafton such a welcome that was a cordial to the weary-hearted minister. And as the weeks went by, how refreshing to Edward Grafton was this entire freedom from all care, and from all necessity for thought; for a time to give himself up to the surroundings of another man's busy, joyous home-life! He became almost a boy again in feeling, as he rambled through the fields, and made acquaintance with the flocks in the pasture-lands, or reclining upon some of the uplands, watched the clouds and the birds in their rapid flight.

Rest was what Mr. Grafton sought now, and he found it in these scenes of Nature, and in God; for where can rest be found without Him? Upon this theme, however, Mr. Hamilton had no sympathy with him, and it had not been referred to during this visit. But one afternoon the two gentlemen were sitting together upon the broad veranda. There could hardly be a more marked contrast than in the two men. Mr. Grafton was slight, spare, with a high, broad forehead; his face was thin and pale now,

but his eyes were still full of the sparkle of intellect, and a smile always lurked about his mouth. Mr. Hamilton was a short, heavy-built man, his face full and florid with health, and his smiling was a loud and hearty laughter. This contrast between them seemed to suddenly attract the attention of Mr. Hamilton, and he said:—"My dear chum, the path you chose to follow when you left college don't seem to agree with you so well as mine has done with me. I remember you as being then a stout, robust young man."

"Yes, I was strong to run the race then," Mr. Grafton replied, with a smile that might have a little of regret in it.

"You will remember, too, I suppose, that at that time I advised you to take up land out here, instead of following out your own plan. Won't you do this now? My word for it, you will find health and wealth in the work."

Mr. Grafton did not reply immediately. He understood this friend very well. He knew that while there was a real sympathy felt for himself, yet that James Hamilton would be glad to bring up again some disputed points. But Edward Grafton did not care, in his present state of health, to renew the discussions that had aroused all of his energies while at Yale.

And yet he must vindicate his Master's cause, and himself somewhat, so he replied: "My dear friend, my views are unchanged from what they were when you and I talked them over in our college-days. I obeyed the Divine call to enter upon the work of preaching Christ. I have never regretted that I yielded to that call. I do not now. It is my chosen work. I love it, and when my health is sufficiently restored, I shall gladly return to it."

"But, Grafton, with that difficulty of yours, how dare you ever attempt to preach again?"

"I hope to become able to do so without harm."

"I remember your wife as a very delicate, sensitive woman. I should think that, for her sake, you would not risk the harm."

This was probing very deeply the heart of Mr. Grafton, but he replied in a gentle, low voice: "I have, indeed, a wife so dear to me that I would willingly endure anything to spare her from suffering. But my duty to my God comes first. And if He takes me away from this life while I am doing His will, I can trust Him to take care of my precious wife and children."

This strong faith and love touched the heart of Mr. Hamilton more than he wished to have

seen, and he tried to conceal it under a combatting sophistry.

"Well, Grafton, you and I used to differ about those things. But we should differ more widely now, for my investigations have led me to regard it all as only a myth of some unhealthy brain."

A look of mingled surprise, grief, and assurance came into Mr. Grafton's face, as he arose and laid one hand upon the shoulder of his friend, and there was in his voice that low, musical undertone that was so familiar to his hearers when his own feelings were most deeply touched.

"My dear Hamilton, you and I never quarreled in the old times at Yale. We will not contend now. But allow me to say this: I, too, have investigated, most thoroughly, since leaving college. I have gone over the whole ground of what is called modern science and philosophy, with a close research into its facts, side by side with a deeper study into all that pertains to the Bible and its Divine Author. And as sure as it is that the sun now shines upon us, there is a one God, and the Bible is His own revealed will! And I find nothing against this belief in any realm of Nature, nor of true science. The Almighty Creator and His works are in unison

with each other, even though we may not see where they harmonize, in every particular point. Your standpoint, dear Hamilton, is not the true one. You will see this sometime. I pray God it may not then be too late!"

James Hamilton could never forget these words, nor the tender pathos of his friend's manner. This scene lingered in memory long after Edward Grafton had gone from earth, and until Mr. Hamilton received the truth as it is revealed in a Divine Saviour.

When Mr. Grafton returned to Quince, he was so much better in health, that he ventured to supply the pulpit for awhile, but the heart-difficulty returned with increased force.

Again physicians warned him not to preach, but to engage in some quiet, secular work. As Edward Grafton heard above the voice of man that of his Divine Master, he bowed in submission.

The truth became known to the loving wife and mother, that the strong arm and the devoted heart, upon which they so fondly leaned, had become weak and liable to be snatched away from them at any moment. Would they ever find heart-rest again upon earth? No!—only as they sought and found it in God!

XXI.

A New Home and New Sorrows.

"And yet again
That Elder Shepherd came,
He claimed another lamb with sadder plaint."

WHEN Mr. Grafton was once more apparently in his usual health, he went to Sacramento and established himself in the counting-room of a friend, while his family were obliged to remain in Quince.

Idnella and Mother Grafton were happy in each other, as they had ever been, but the prolonged absence of the husband and son was like shutting out from them the warm, glad sunshine. Idnella was not reconciled to have it so, but the Divine Guide was leading his unsubmissive child more gently than she realized at the time. He was teaching her to become accustomed to the sole watch-care of her children, and unconsciously to herself she was being prepared to live without the loving presence of her husband.

Two years passed away, and Mr. Grafton was again able to have his family with him. The new home was in a village, the most healthy location he could find, and within easy distance from the city for his own daily going and coming by railroad.

Joyful was the reunion to the husband and wife, in a home of their own again! Their future was opening with bright hopes. Mr. Grafton's health seemed rapidly returning, and he preached quite often. His physicians, however, warned him against assuming any pastoral charge for the present. There was a strong expectation that he might venture to do so before long, but for at least another year he must continue his quiet work in the counting-room.

Ah! the true family life is all that is left of the happiness of Eden, and to Idnella Grafton her home was an Eden of joy.

The community was composed of rich and fashionable people, living in elegant mansions with extensive grounds. Each lady had her own circle of friends, and did not care to inquire about the strangers who came to live in the white cottage, almost hidden behind trees and flowers, and so Idnella was more isolated from society than she had ever been before. She was not dependent upon general society for happiness; and with

her husband and children about her she was content, and her heart satisfied.

Ah, so entirely satisfied! It was such a delight to be in her own home again, with her husband and children, that she wished for nothing more.

Idnella was conscious of feeling, — "Oh, if my husband and children could be with me always, I would not want to go to Heaven!"

Ah! most loving heart! What could the Blessed Refiner do to wean her from this earth-clinging, and give her a sure heart-rest in Himself?

It was in the spring that Mr. Grafton carried his family to their new home in the Villa. The summer proved to be more unhealthy than it was ever known to be in that region before. In the city a terrible epidemic raged. At the Villa there was sickness and death in almost every family.

In the Grafton home there were three children. Oh! how closely the mother-heart enfolded these darlings, as she heard of the fearful sickness about them, that the doctors were powerless to control; but at last it visited her love-guarded home. The only son, Everett, was first taken, and then little Effa, the two-year-old pet. For many weeks they alternated between hope and fear, while day and night the delicate, over-wearied mother watched unaided and alone

over her precious ones. Circumstances compelled her to this lonely watching. Old friends were far away; the few new ones had their own sick and dying ones to attend. Hired help could not be obtained, and Mr. Grafton was obliged to remain closely confined to the city. Without any vacation, he had to go early and remain late, through all the summer-days. The close confinement and new responsibilities in the business, added to his solicitude about his family, caused a return of the heart-disease. He did not tell his wife of this, as he hoped to be better and would not add to her anxiety. Idnella saw that Mr. Grafton was growing pale and thin, and trembled at any thought of danger to this precious one. She could not prevent the daily overtaxing, she could change none of the circumstances; but she could insist that he should take his sleep and rest at night. Often, through the long night-hours, she hushed with a low, sweet lullaby the restlessness of her sick little ones, that her husband might not be disturbed. Weeks passed away; the children recovered; Mr. Grafton seemed well, and the mother-heart was at rest about them all.

One Sabbath evening Mr. Grafton gathered his wife and children close about himself for the accustomed Bible-reading and prayer. Afterwards,

they had a joyous time singing. Sickness had not permitted this before in the new home, but now the dear old hymns were sung with all the zest of former times. As the musical tenor of Mr. Grafton's voice mingled with Idnella's in the song, and she drew her children closer within her arms, her heart was full with a satisfied, all-pervading happiness.

Again there swept through her soul that absorbing, strangely tender earth-clinging, — "Oh, if I could keep my precious husband and children always with me, I would not wish to go to Heaven!"

This was the last singing with her husband upon earth.

In the coming week little Effa was again very sick. When Mr. Grafton came at night from the city he was unusually exhausted by his labors in the office, and said, —

"I think we can do without the doctor until morning. Try again the remedies that relieved her before. Do not feel alarmed; let us trust in God; He will do all things well. See, she is now sleeping quietly. Try and rest some yourself, my darling wife."

But there was no rest for the anxious mother. The old remedies failed to relieve the little sufferer, and it became evident that the physician

was needed. He was a long distance away, and Idnella felt sure that her husband must not be aroused for that midnight-walk.

Near them were the beautiful grounds of a wealthy family. The coachman's house was in a lane at the end of Mr. Grafton's garden. Idnella knew that this man was a husband and a father. He had horses in his care. The thought came suddenly to her, to go to this man and ask him, in the name of his own little ones, to take one of his horses and bring the doctor for her sick child.

She left the moaning babe alone in her cradle, and hurried down the garden-path, pushed off from the fence some of the loose paling, and made her way into the lane. She succeeded in arousing the family, but her pleading request was refused. They did not wish to be troubled.

Oh, the bitterness of being sick and among strangers!

What more could Idnella Grafton do for her child or her husband? Pray she could not. Out there in the gloom and silence of night, the star of faith in God shone but dimly in her heart, that was now so weary and sad.

Hastening back, she met her husband at the door. He was all ready for his long walk. Ah, if she could have spared her husband from that

fatal night-air walk! As Mr. Grafton was leaving he said,—

"I will have the doctor come immediately, but I will go into the city by the early train, get some medicine, and return to you. Keep up your brave courage a little longer, my darling wife! We will soon have our little Effa well again."

The mother resumed her lonely watch, and slowly,—oh, so slowly,—the hours wore away. The physician did not come. She could do nothing more to relieve the increasing distress of the little sufferer. Morning came at last, and Mr. Grafton returned from the city.

"What did the doctor say?" was his first question.

"Oh! my dear, the doctor did not come!"

"Not come? He promised me he would come at once. Well, I have brought a medicine that I think will surely help her."

This medicine was given, and the physician came, but it was too late. All remedies were useless now, for the Good Shepherd was taking this cherished lamb to Himself.

Little Effa was a fair, gentle child, ever clinging fondly to her mother, and even in her sufferings she returned her mother's caresses. In her greatest distress she was soothed to quietness by her mother's sweet lullaby.

Idnella sat by her dying child, soothing it with familiar melodies, and keeping one little hand within her own, while her heart continually said, "I cannot give her up! I cannot give her up!"

As the last struggle with death came, the fainting mother was led away; and stranger-hands cared for her babe until it was folded within the Saviour's arms.

At one o'clock Mr. Grafton whispered to his wife, —

"She is gone! Our darling little Effa is safe with Jesus! Try, my precious wife, to feel willing to have it so! Think how she can never suffer again!"

Ah! yes, now the mourning mother can lean upon the loving sympathy of her husband. Alas! for her, when the midnight-hour shall come again!

XXII.

The Crucible Darkens.

"The Chastener's hand is on us — we may weep,
But not repine."

— *Hemans.*

IT was a sorrowful home the morning after little Effa died. The mother wept in unsubmissive anguish. The children in sadness looked with strange wonder upon the little face, so still, so lovely, even in death. The father, pale yet calm, ministered to the comfort of his wife and children. After breakfast he gathered them close about him for the usual family devotions. He read some of the most comforting promises in the Bible, and prayed with his family as they had never heard him pray before. He seemed, indeed, to enter into the very presence of Infinite Love. How earnestly, how tenderly, did he ask that Divine Love to come near and comfort and sustain his precious wife, and save his children! "Oh! Father in Heaven, gather us all home at last with Thee, a whole family, safe in Heaven!"

In time of danger or of trouble every human being — however skeptical they may have been as to God and His truths — instinctively reaches out imploring hands to some Higher Power. God's trusting ones know what inexpressible help and comfort are given to them through prayer.

Edward Grafton was receiving this rich consolation, as he carried his loved ones into the Divine Presence — for the last time. He did not know that it was the last, — but God knew, and indited his prayer. The prayer was soothing to Idnella, and its remembrance would be precious in the coming years. But her comfort was more in her husband than in her Saviour. He, in His pitiful love, will not forsake her. Even while leading His unsubmissive, weary one out into the bleak mountain-storm of life's bitterest sorrows, He will remain with her to protect her from the death-chilling blasts until she willingly turns to find her all in Himself.

It was arranged that the funeral of little Effa would be on the following morning. Mr. Grafton would take her to Quince, and have her laid by the side of his father. He had to go to the city to make necessary arrangements.

"I will be gone only one hour; will return in the next train. Do not grieve too much over little Effa; try to trust all with God.

Spare yourself, and rest, for my sake, dear one."

It was early morning when Mr. Grafton rode to the city. The cars passed through villages and parts of the city where the epidemic was raging fearfully. Upon reaching his place of business Mr. Grafton sent word to friends in the city, of the death of his child, inviting them to the funeral that evening, for he found that he must leave so soon in the morning that it would be necessary to have the service that evening. He also sent his mother a telegram, telling her that he was coming to Quince with the remains of little Effa.

Before he was quite ready to return home, he was taken with the symptoms of the prevailing sickness. Immediately he made use of the best remedies the doctors prescribed, hoping soon to be able to return to his wife without giving her any new cause for alarm; but he was not in a condition to ride home until the time of his usual return at night. He went then in company with many of the business men residing at the Villa. During this ride Mr. Grafton appeared to be in his usual health, entering into conversation with peculiar animation.

As hour after hour came and went, Idnella no longer wept over her child, but became alarmed

about her husband. She knew that nothing but some insurmountable obstacle could keep him away from her on this sad day. She feared it was an attack of heart disease. How could she endure the suspense? Oh! for one friend that she could ask to go to the city and make inquiries for her; but there was no one — not even a stranger. Every gentleman belonging to the Villa was at his place of business in the city.

It was a bright, sunny day, but a dark shadow, like a cloud, enveloped Mrs. Grafton within its sombre folds. She did not weep; she could not pray. In restless agitation she walked her room, listening for the coming train. When it passed on, she watched to hear the next, and the next, that she continually hoped would bring her husband home.

Late in the afternoon a lady called. Idnella had never seen her before; but she knew, by the name given, that she was the wife of one of the merchant-princes of the city, and her home one of the beautiful mansions near by. Introducing herself, Mrs. De Strand said, —

"I was told that a minister's family was in sorrow, and I have come to offer my sympathy, and any needed assistance."

Her gentle, cordial sympathy fell like a balm upon the fevered heart of the anxious wife.

Her cordial manner made her appear to Idnella like an old friend coming to her in her sorrow.

"Oh! if I could have known about you before, I would gladly have helped you in your sickness and sorrow. I have always called at this house in the summer, when we are out here, but my own family have been sick, and my house filled with friends from the city. Let me be as a sister to you now, in this time of sorrow." She came like an angel-visitant, when most needed. Surely Heaven must have sent this lovely woman to minister to Idnella in her dark and bitter grief.

The long, sad day was closing. The hour had come which had always brought home the business men from the city. The whistle announced the approaching cars. In a few moments Mr. Grafton was seen coming up the walk to his home. Ah! what a dark weight of dread was now lifted from the heart of his wife! With the same quick step and smile as usual, he came to meet her.

"Have you been very anxious about me, darling?"

"Anxious! O, Edward, this has been the most terrible day of my life! But why did you stay?"

"There was some writing to be done."

How could they allow you to stay for that, was the thought that flashed through the mind

of Idnella. Ah! little did she think that her husband by this reply was sparing her the knowledge of his illness in the city. For the same reason he went on to say, —

"I took some refreshment this afternoon, and do not need any now. I found that I must leave here so early in the morning for Quince, that we must have the funeral this evening. Some friends from the city will come on the next train. I told the gentlemen in the cars with me. The minister, and a few friends about us here, will come in at half-past seven o'clock."

Mr. Grafton's words indicated that he was in his usual health. The fears of his wife were all gone, now that he was with her again; but there was a look in his face she could not understand. She thought it must be exhaustion, and that he ought to have immediate rest, and she said, —

"My dear, you are very tired; do go and lie down awhile, until our friends come."

Mr. Grafton looked at her a moment, and then with only a sad smile, turned and went up stairs. It was so unlike her husband to be willing to rest, in the present circumstances, that for a moment she looked at his retiring form with wonder. A thought that he was sick did not enter her mind, but she felt glad that he was willing

to rest. His safe return home had nerved up her own sinking energies, and without hesitation she went to meet the strange duties for a mourning mother to assume.

There had been no preparation in the house for the funeral service, and there was no one but the mother to direct in the needful arrangement of the rooms, and see to it that all things were in order. Idnella quietly instructed her house-maid what to do, and when this was done, she went with her two children, Emma and Everett, up stairs. There she found her husband sick with symptoms of the epidemic. She gave him at once the remedies considered a certain relief. He was in no pain, only so tired, he said.

"Dear husband, you ought not to go down stairs again to-night. You must rest. Will it not be best for you to undress, and go to bed now?"

Mr. Grafton made no objection to his wife's suggestion. He yielded to her assistance, and soon laid his head upon the pillow with a look of quiet satisfaction.

When Mrs. Grafton saw her husband and children in bed, apparently comfortable for the night, the thought for a moment flitted through her mind, "Must I leave them here and sit alone at little Effa's funeral to-night? O, must I bear it alone?" Only for one brief moment did she stop

to think of herself, and then she was called to go down stairs. The undertaker had come with the little casket, and the mother must give him some directions. But stranger hands arranged and placed the little one in the casket. How lovely she looked when all was done. Upon her breast, and about her head, kind, stranger hands had laid fresh flowers. Her eyes were pleasantly closed, as if in sleep. The fair, golden hair was smoothed back from the white forehead. The little cheek was sound as in health, and around the mouth lingered one of her sweet smiles. For a moment the mother bent in tears over her darling, kissing fondly the clear, marble brow.

XXIII.

A Fiery Crucible.

"'Go! Go!' I cried,—
For once again that Shepherd laid His hand
Upon the noblest of our household band.
. . . . . .
And yet, how wondrous sweet
The look with which He heard my passionate cry,
. . . . For him, O let me die!
'A little while,' He said, with smile and sigh,
'Again to meet!'

"Hopeless I fell,—
And when I rose,—the light had burned so low,
So faint,—I could not see my darling go!
He had not bidden me farewell!"

AFTER a brief absence Idnella Grafton hastened back to her husband. She saw that he was no better. Again she hurried down stairs, sent for a physician, and prepared a new remedy for her husband. When she carried it to him he said to her,—

"My precious wife, you must not run up and down stairs so much."

"Oh, I shall do well enough when you are better. Do n't think about me now, only try to get well."

Ah! these words of anxious love were the last words between Idnella and her husband. Only once did he apparently recognize her afterwards. As she came to his bedside she met his eyes looking intently into her face. It was a look full of pitying tenderness and a yearning love. He must have felt conscious at that moment that he was to be taken from his family; away from his helpless children; his precious wife, in her delicate situation! But how, in his own exhaustion, could he meet any word of farewell? He was going with only that look of unutterable love, and a prayer to Heaven.

Finally that prayer was heard and answered. What but a Divine power could keep Idnella through all those after scenes?

She had no thought of the true condition of her husband. She knew that his sickness was the terrible epidemic, but she had often heard the physicians say there was little danger if the disease was promptly met with efficient remedies. Surely the best remedies had immediately been given. Not one thought came into her mind that he would not be relieved. Her only thought was to procure, without delay, the remedies the physicians called for.

Buoyed up by the expectation that her now suffering husband would very soon be better, she went herself with fleet steps to get the needed remedies.

Ah! how sadly did she mourn in after days, that she could not have known the truth until it was too late! If she could have understood, at the moment, the meaning of that last look! If she had only known that her precious husband was leaving her! That even then his feet were stepping into the river of death! Oh! if she could have had one parting word with her husband!

The Heavenly Refiner knew best how to take the loving wife safely through this "fiery furnace." He would place her within a "cleft of the Rock," and cover her by His hand. Hidden and sheltered there, Idnella would not at first feel the full force of this terrible crucible.

By almost indistinct replies, the physician learned of Mr. Grafton's illness in the city, and from friends he learned that his patient had some disease of the heart.

"Ah! that ride in the cars so soon was a fatal mistake, and the heart-difficulty interferes with the best effect of all remedies. In this relapse it is impossible to save him."

This the physician said in a private interview

with the city friends. It was decided, also, that this must be kept from Mr. Grafton's wife as long as possible.

The hour came for the funeral of little Effa, and the lower rooms were filled with stranger friends. Mr. Grafton had preached several times at the Villa, and had formed acquaintances with many business men. Now they came to the funeral of his child.

In the room below Idnella met Mrs. De Strand, the lady who called that afternoon. She took Mrs. Grafton's hand, and said, —

"I have a brother with me, who came from the city in the same car with your husband. My brother is a physician in the city, has had much experience in this epidemic, and has never lost a patient when remedies were used in season. If you and Doctor Malvern wish for his assistance, he will do all he can for your husband."

Doctor Malvern gladly welcomed so valuable an assistant. Idnella's quick thought was, "Oh, he will surely give something to relieve my darling soon!"

Doctor Fleetwood understood at once that this was a hopeless case, yet he spared no effort to relieve the suffering man. The doctor had been sick himself with the same epidemic, and had left his patients to rest, but all through these

hours he devoted himself to this dying stranger. He said afterwards, —

"I know Mr. Grafton was a good man from what I saw of him in his sufferings. I would have sacrificed a fortune if I could have saved him."

The physicians sent the wife away from the room upon some fictitious errand. She was fearfully excited, yet outwardly quiet and calm, and still feeling "My precious husband will soon be better!"

The friends had left them, all but a few whose sympathy was stronger than their fears. One of this number, — Mrs. De Strand, — came to Idnella, and taking her hand, whispered, "Come with me, dear friend," and led the way into the now deserted parlor. Closing the door, Mrs. De Strand said, —

"I think that God has answered my prayers sometimes. I want to pray with you now. Perhaps our Father in Heaven will hear me for your husband."

Mrs. Grafton had never seen this lady until that afternoon, but she knew she belonged to a circle of wealth and fashion; and now to hear her speak of praying, and of answered prayer, seemed so strange that it penetrated even her now dazed mind with wonder. She listened in

silence, and in the now quiet room, where lay the coffined form of little Effa, they knelt side by side, and earnestly and tenderly Mrs. De Strand prayed for the wife and husband.

Tender as the praying was it failed to soothe the soul that was going deeper into the crucible; but it was answered, as Idnella was kept in the coming agony.

Mrs. Grafton returned to her husband, and found him in a quiet sleep. Passing her hand gently over his forehead, how her heart bounded with joy as she found that he was in a profuse perspiration! She had so often heard it said that this was a sure indication that the patient was out of danger. Now her heart began to sing for gladness. Her precious husband was out of danger and resting so quietly! All her solicitude, and her own sufferings and exhaustion, were forgotten in this great joy.

In the fullest expectation that the doctors would confirm her glad hope, Idnella turned to the physician standing near, and asked him, "What do you think of him now?"

The physician did not notice who the questioner was, nor indeed that the wife was in the room, or his answer would have been a different one. His reply was, —

"There is no hope, — not the least."

Oh, what a thunder-bolt to fall upon her quivering heart! Just now it was overflowing with eager joy; in one moment it is so crushed that not a word nor a moan could come from her marble lips.

She sank into a chair, then started and knelt by her husband's side. He was dying, — not asleep, — but unconscious of suffering, under the effect of chloroform. The moisture upon his forehead was only the dew of death. Dying! Yet his wife, who loves him so fondly, kneels by him without any apparent emotion. No words, — no tears; she is paralyzed in her whole being!

"Oh, there are griefs for nature too intense,
Whose first rude shock but stupifies the soul."

The physicians deeply regretted the mistake that so suddenly made known the truth to Mrs. Grafton. In a moment they lifted her up, and led her down stairs. She turned from them, passed out upon the veranda, and sat down.

The night was dark and starless. The wind moaned low amid the foliage of a large tree that shaded the cottage. The lights from the parlor and from the chamber shone out into the darkness, lighting up the grass-plat where her children had often played in happy glee; light-

ing up also the gravel walk and gate where she had so often awaited the return of her husband from the city.

Now, little Effa was in her coffin in the parlor; her husband was in that lighted-up chamber dying.

But through her bewildered brain only this thought kept whirling with almost a meaningless ring,—

"How terrible! oh, how terrible! oh, how terrible!"

Soon she was lifted and taken within the house. Stimulants were given to her, soothing hands were laid upon her face, gentle words of sympathy were whispered in her ear; but perfectly still, without one sound from her closed lips, Idnella was like a marble form sitting in her chair.

After a time the physicians led her back to the side of her unconscious husband. The sight of him aroused her from that strange apathy. The pale, stiff lips opened, and she murmured,—

"Oh, my darling! my darling! wake up, speak to me, oh, speak to me!"

"Why!" she now exclaimed, wildly,—"Why cannot my husband speak to me again? Oh, do arouse him, do arouse him, doctor!"

At last the truth reached the heart of Idnella

Grafton that her husband was beyond the reach of her voice.

Again she was taken down stairs, and laid upon her bed. Again she sprang up to return to her husband, but the physician detained her.

"My child, you must keep quiet now!"

"Doctor, I must go to my husband! He must speak to me once more! I must go to him!"

"Not yet, wait a little"; he said gently.

Idnella was now fully conscious of the terrors of the hour. Little Effa was in her sealed-up coffin; her husband was dying,—he would soon be gone.

She insisted pleadingly that she must return to her husband, but the physicians, for her own sake, firmly, but most kindly, held her back.

It was indeed a fearful storm that now swept through the whole being of Idnella Grafton. The agony of the death-shadow grew darker about her soul. The physicians and friends feared for her life or her reason.

Yet amid the blackness of the tempest, the "Star of Bethlehem" glimmered faintly into her soul. She was now unable to think connectedly, but she retained some memory of the only source of help, and her pleading cry was,—

"Will you not pray? Oh, some one pray to God!"

There was no one with her that could pray. Yet she was not forsaken. Her most precious friend upon earth was taken from her, but the Divine Friend was still near, keeping her distracted mind.

The two physicians were both strangers to the family until that night. Both of them had been overtaxed day and night through the summer. Doctor Fleetwood was still weak from a recent illness himself, but he and Doctor Malvern gave their time and strength to Mr. Grafton and his wife.

The distress of Mr. Grafton was terrible when he was not under the influence of chloroform.

The physicians passed from one bedside to the other, trying to soothe the wife, and giving quieting remedies, until she was in that deep sleep that often comes through intense sorrow.

To the husband they continually administered chloroform to alleviate his increasing sufferings. Rapidly and fearfully Mr. Grafton sank under the power of the dreadful disease.

Again it was one o'clock at night. At that still hour, with only the two physicians and the friend from the city beside him, Mr. Grafton breathed his last, and his freed soul followed little Effa to Heaven.

His two little ones were no doubt waiting to welcome him there. With what untold rapture he bows with them at the feet of his glorious, long-loved Saviour!

Oh, what wonderful happiness to see that Saviour, and live for ever in His immediate presence!

Is there one reader of these pages who will be inclined to question the utility or power of prayer, because Mr. Grafton was not saved from death, and his wife from sorrow?

If so, we ask their special attention to a few facts:—

Is it not unusual for overworked doctors, with an extensive practice, and in times of a terrible epidemic, to give themselves for a night to a stranger who is hopelessly sick with a contagious disease?

Is there not a coincidence between prayer to God, and these two skillful physicians unusually and willingly devoting their energies to save Mr. Grafton from all possible suffering? They knew that he must die, and remained with him only to soften the pangs of death.

Was there not answered prayer in behalf of the wife? With her extremely sensitive nature, and clinging affections, what power but an Omniscient one, carried her, and her unborn babe,

through scenes so terrible that strong men quailed even to look at them?

Will it be said, that it was her own fortitude and strength of mind? This could not be, for she was utterly crushed in heart and mind.

Was it a comforting trust in God? No; for that was not felt then, or for a long time after. Was it the sympathy of friends? No earthly sympathy could reach the depths of that sorrow, and in vain will all the philosophy of the most self-sufficient scholar try to understand and solve this problem:—

"How was Idnella Grafton kept?"

Yet, in the sublime truths of the Bible, all this is explained. God did hear and answer, in His own best way, the prayers of Mr. Grafton and other friends. God does not always give the answer to prayer that our hearts wish for, but does give the best answer.

Mr. Grafton's work on earth closed, but by his patient bearing of great suffering, he compelled his physicians to give honor to his Divine Lord, and his suffering wife was sustained and sheltered in the Pavilion of Infinite Love.

XXIV.

In The Fiery Furnace.

"But when 't is past, — that still and speechless hour
Of the sealed bosom, and the tearless eye, —
Then the roused mind awakes with ten-fold power,
To grasp the fullness of its agony."

Hemans.

MORNING came again, fair and bright, but in the home of Mrs. Grafton there was stillness and desolation.

What an awakening from her death-like sleep! Her husband gone! Utterly gone, — vanished out of sight; even the precious form was hidden and sealed in the coffin, never more to be seen!

One morning he was giving tender care to his wife and children, the next he was in the Heavenly "Mansions," exulting in the bliss, and uniting in the songs of the angels, while his stricken wife sat alone between the caskets of her husband and child, a hot pressure upon her brain, and a tearless agony upon her heart. Yet she

was calm and still. No words; no moaning; no tears.

Alone, without a comforter! No one dared to come into the room so infected with the fatal disease. No one until Mrs. De Strand came again as a brave, ministering spirit.

As she looked upon that white, tearless face, so full of suffering, yet lying so still upon the husband's coffin, her own heart was deeply touched with wondering sympathy, and she thought,—"how is it that this most loving and delicate woman lives through such scenes as this?"

Sitting down by Idnella, Mrs. De Strand drew the hot head away from the coffin to her own breast. Mrs. De Strand spoke of many things, but it seemed like talking to a marble form, yet some words did penetrate Idnella's crushed heart, giving to it a little needed cordial.

Mrs. De Strand did not again leave Idnella until her husband and child were laid in the tomb; and she was once more in a deep sleep.

Sabbath morning, one week later, Idnella heard the church-bells ringing, and they stirred faint memories of happy hours,—dim, faded memories, as of beautiful treasures,—that were hers in the long ago years.

On this morning death was seeking to take

another of her darlings, but her benumbed heart had no fears, no mother-solicitude. She had suffered all that was possible, and could feel no added pain, if her precious family were all removed.

Had not God placed her in "a cleft of the Rock," until the storm was a little passed by?

Did not the Divine Refiner cover her heart with His own hand, so that the "fiery crucible" might not destroy the earthly casket of her being?

Early that Sabbath morning, Everett, the only son, was taken with the same fearful disease that had removed his father and sister. The physician said that his life depended upon his being kept quiet; but he was restless, and could not be quieted.

He asked his mother to sing him to sleep. Idnella had sung often to soothe the other children; could she sing now? Not in words. The lips that were frozen in that sudden agony were still too tightly compressed to move to any words.

Her suffering little son looked up pleadingly and said,—

"Please, mamma, sing to me now as you used to do when I was tired."

The mother laid her face close to his ear,

and murmured a low, familiar melody that soothed him into a quiet that kept his fluttering pulse until remedies could have the desired effect.

In the same silent, unmoved manner, Idnella ministered instinctively to all the needs of her sick child.

After the morning when she awoke to find her husband hidden from her sight, she had remained in that same marble-like apathy. The physicians, and other friends, were anxious to hurry her away from her sorrowful surroundings. As soon as Everett was strong enough to be removed, Idnella and her two remaining children were placed upon the steamboat that would take them to Quince.

In April, Idnella Grafton left Quince with her husband, both indulging bright hopes of many joyful years together.

In September she returned alone, in a dazed and crushed widowhood. A whirlwind of sorrow had swept over her, and every joy was withered.

She did not yet discern anything clearly, but in an indistinct way knew all this, and that there was a tearless agony pressing upon her heart, as she looked out upon the moon-lit water, or walked the ladies' saloon, the long night of her journey.

Alone with her children, among strangers, she was still perfectly calm; but her face revealed such a story of keen suffering, that one and another of the ladies ventured to ask her, —

"Have you not had some great sorrow?"

The only answer that came from those white lips was a low "Yes."

When Idnella reached the dear old home in Quince, and her husband's mother welcomed her in tears, but with loving words, this paralysis passed away, and tears came to relieve the burdened heart and brain. Memory and thought were quickened, too, into all the realities of her bereavement. Idnella had been stunned, but with the return of full consciousness she must go through the anguish of giving up her husband. How she wept! How strongly came again that intense desire to see him, even if only to look upon his face in the coffin.

She did not speak of her trouble. None knew of her constant agony; no one saw the widowed heart weep; — no one but God. His presence and His words gave Idnella no comfort now.

Will any one say that this is an argument against the truths of the Bible?

Nay, but these truths are most sublimely confirmed in such hours of dark sorrow.

Mrs. Grafton was still in the "fiery crucible."

She was weak and bewildered through intense suffering. She could realize nothing but her own pain.

The Almighty Refiner still sustained her that she should not entirely sink under this testing trial.

What if she were not conscious of His presence and loving care? Ocean storms are often too terrific for the trembling passengers to see, or know anything about the pilot who is calmly guiding them safely into the harbor.

When Idnella's wild yearning to see her husband was fast verging upon insanity, God permitted her to become quieted in pleasant dreams; her distracted mind, and tortured, bleeding heart was placed again amid all the pleasant surroundings of her happy home.

This was not spiritism which is from the arch enemy, who seeks to take the crown from the only Saviour, and bewilders souls only to destroy them.

The Holy Spirit is the only Helper and Comforter.

Then came her little Eddie. He was a fair, sweet babe; but the poor mother gave no heed to him, nor to her two other darlings. In her physical prostration her bitter sorrow returned with added fury. More intensely than ever she

missed her husband. How she longed and listened for his voice, and his footstep, that could come to her no more!

Her thoughts flew back to the Villa; and in every wakeful hour she lived over again those last terrible scenes. There were no words, or tears, or moaning! No earthly friend could know how it was with her. Only the white face that rested upon the pillow, with constantly closed eyes, bore too plainly the impress of intense suffering!

What could friends say, or how comfort her? Oh! if she would only talk to them, or they could see her weeping again!

But tears and prayers were daily given for her. Mother Grafton had gathered to her heart the dear family of her son. She was bowed with grief for his loss, but gave loving sympathy to Idnella.

In the old home in Weston was the same loving Mother Heyward, and the bethel chamber, hallowed by many years of prayer, now witnessed her strong crying unto God that He would spare the life of her deeply-tried daughter!

Idnella did not wish to live, but longed to be laid in the grave beside her loved one.

"What did keep her alive?"

Not her own will and effort at this time, most

certainly. Not the kind ministrations of skillful physicians, giving to her stimulating tonics. She had no physician, nor any remedies.

God, who has all power, and is Infinite in Wisdom, in Holiness, in Mercy, and in Loving-kindness, kept her. His words are true:—

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."—*Matt.* 28:20.

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."—*Isa.* 41:10.

This promise of God was fulfilled to Idnella, though she was as unconscious at the time as a sick babe in the loving arms that enfold it; or as a storm-chilled lamb that lies insensible upon the shepherd's shoulder. The watchful, tender care is just as real in her need as in that of the others.

At last there was given to Idnella a thought of her children.

"Oh! if I die what will become of them?"

The mother-love was reviving in her heart, and with that the feeling came, "I must try to live for my little children."

How could she live or gain strength, so long as her weak mind would not be controlled, but

constantly flew back over all those distracting scenes at the Villa?

Her unseen Helper directed how it should be done.

Ever since the birth of her babe, Idnella had been lying with a white, still face, and eyes always closed; her brain never resting. Not one of her friends thought that she would live.

Suddenly she asked for her Bible.

"What! read when you are so weak?"

By a touch of the Divine hand her mother-love was giving to her an upward impulse to live. The sad, tearless eyes began to look rapidly over the pages of His Word, her weak hands eagerly grasping the only means He suggested to help her to live.

She could not remember one word the moment she raised her eyes from the page, but while reading God's Word the first soothing fell upon the bleeding heart. Then the hard tension upon the brain gave way again to relieving tears.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, *so* the *Lord pitieth* them that fear Him."—*Psalm* 103:13.

"The Lord is my shepherd." "Be not far from me, O Lord." "O my Strength, haste to help me." "Keep me as the apple of the eye." "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings." "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His

pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me." "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth."

For a moment the weary, yet eager eyes lingered upon some words in Isaiah:—

"For thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer."

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee."

"And a Man shall be as a Hiding Place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Then the thin, white hands hastened over the pages to find the words of that "Man," Christ Jesus.

"Come unto Me." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "I am with you alway." "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "In my Father's house

are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Then the leaves were turned to Revelation, for the faint spirit longed to catch some glimpse of that place, in the Heavenly Mansions, and some glimpse of Heaven's joys.

"And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters; and the voice of harpers harping with their harps." "And they sung a new song, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us unto God." "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His own blood," "be glory and dominion forever and ever." "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it," "and on His head were many crowns." "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life."

A new theme came to thrill with a new hope the lonely wife-heart.

Modern Spiritism was filling the land with stories of its marvelous manifestations. Many intelligent and good people were blinded by their presumptuous assertions, so that without questioning or sufficient investigation, they accepted it as a truth that, the spirits of friends returned to earth, and could communicate with them.

"How wonderful!" "How very beautiful it is, that mourning hearts can be comforted in this way!" This was what many began to say, but they were of the class who never stop to search below the surface of a new wonder. They failed to see that in all this there was left out all thought and all need of God, as the Holy Comforter.

Step by step it was unfolded to those who followed the teachings of Spiritism, that the friends in the spirit-world were to aid those upon earth to reach the Better Land, and there was no need of an Almighty Saviour.

Ah! those who accepted this teaching had forgotten about the great enemy, who uses his demoniacal power to destroy every human soul. Or perhaps he had influenced them to disbelieve in his own existence. He has done this with many.

The bewildering mazes of modern Spiritism are one of his grand devices. He comes to a heart that is mourning the death of a loved one; comes so softly, that even the Christian heart will not at first be alarmed by his presence; he whispers gently, "Your friend is not gone, but is still with you."

The heart, now doubly weak through suffering, grasps eagerly at this thought; then Satan leads

it on, and entirely away from the Only and Almighty Redeemer and Comforter.

It is in this way that the arch enemy of all humanity is striving to snatch the conquering crown from Christ Jesus, and place it upon his own brow.

He came to Mrs. Grafton with the insinuating thought that her husband might be near to her, and might give to her some token of his presence.

She had leaned so entirely upon her husband for all things, and it was so hard for her to do without his guidance. Oh! if she could only believe,—feel that his spirit could come back to her!

"It is true! I know it is true!" said one who wished much to help her in her sorrow.

"But I do not feel that it is true," she replied. "Yet, if it can be so, if I can know that my husband is sometimes near to me, how it will comfort me!"

"Others have received that comfort from their friends. Why not you? You better read some of the wonderful manifestations."

Idnella consented to do so, and read so-called messages from the spirit-world, and their descriptions of the great "hereafter."

They were full of a dreamy sunshine, and of

flowers; of roaming spirits, each seeking pleasure in his own way; but there was nothing of God as the Centre of Heaven's joys! Nothing of Christ, the only Saviour!

Could Idnella Grafton accept such teachings? Oh! no! She was too well-informed in God's eternal truths.

Though her weak, suffering heart yearned for just this comforting,—to feel her husband near to her,—yet she could not believe in Spiritism. It discarded the Divine Saviour and the Bible. In Him and His Word was her only reliance; though she was too bewildered to realize all its comfort.

XXV.

Little Eddie.

"And so, I gave thee up,
My darling one! With tearful, silent trust,
Relinquished thee to Him who surely keeps
What is committed to Him."

AFTER some months, Mrs. Grafton again assumed the care of her children. Her mother-love was the motive-power God used to cause her to struggle back from the grave, and now she clasped her fatherless darlings very closely, with the feeling, "I will try to live, and be strong, to care for my precious ones."

The widowed heart was still bleeding. The pale face still bore the impress of suffering. Friends said of her, "She will never smile again."

It was so hard to take up life's duties without the loving presence that had been so much to her! How could she live on and on without him?

The Divine Friend who had been sustaining her through all this suffering, began to reveal

Himself through the enveloping clouds. These words reached her heart,—

"Be of good cheer,— it is I,— be not afraid."

It was her Saviour's voice. She had loved Him in her girlhood. She loved Him in her happy life, as wife and mother; but she knew, now, that she had loved her husband more.

Though Christ is Divine, He is human, too, and has gentle tenderness for those who need His chastening. Ah! how pitifully has He watched this soul, suffering in His refining crucible!

There were new blessings awaiting Idnella, from the Lord. As time passed, she felt that the Saviour was drawing her nearer to Himself.

She still suffered intensely at times, but gradually there was unfolded to her soul the priceless value of the Saviour's love, as she never had seen it before. With a faith that was new to her, she saw God as her Father, Saviour, Comforter; Heaven was to her a home now! Her husband and two children were there, and Jesus, her Living, Ever-present Friend!

Dear home in Heaven! How pure, how glorious, how winning it seemed, as the eye of faith caught a glimpse of its untold joys!

At length Idnella was peaceful and happy, and willing to think of her husband as far away in the "many mansions."

A widow! How pitifully Idnella had always looked upon others in widowhood! How her heart quivered when she first heard it applied to herself! Could it be that she was drinking of that same bitter cup? Ah! yes, indeed! Her husband's loving protection was gone, and she stood alone, to meet the hardships of life; but in this crucible she had been brought so near to the Divine Refiner, that she now trusted in His protection as never before.

In a strength and courage that God only gave to her, Idnella began caring for her children.

They were all to remain at the homestead, but Idnella knew that Mother Grafton needed quiet; so she decided to make her own home in one part of the house, and there the young mother gathered her three darlings very closely to her heart. How precious they were to her! What a comfort! It was their pleading helplessness that first aroused her out of her bitter grief, and now their sweet voices cheered her.

For the sake of her children, Idnella put away tears from her face and heart as fast as possible, that there might be sunshine in the home for them. For them she raised again the dear family-altar, that for herself had seemed forever broken down. For the good of her little ones

Idnella compelled herself to sing again, and teach them to sing with her.

No one but a widowed mother can know, fully, how soothing are little, happy voices singing, or little ones listening eagerly, with sparkling eyes, to stories and Bible questions.

To an unselfish mother there is compensation for all effort, in the love of her children. To Idnella Grafton this was given in full measure.

Circumstances compelled Mrs. Grafton to do whatever she could to support her children. Her weak arm was nerved up for wonderful effort to shield them from every want. At times she grew faint under her load of care and labor, but then came that welcome voice, saying, "It is I, — be not afraid!" "My grace is sufficient for thee!" "I will never leave thee, — nor forsake!"

Three years after Mr. Grafton's death, Idnella gathered her children about her in their home, one Sabbath after church-service, for the accustomed Bible questions, hymns, and prayer.

What a pleasant and precious little group circled about the mother! Emma, with her sparkling eyes, Everett, and Eddie, — little Eddie, the babe that came to her arms when her heart was breaking in her great sorrow! He came like a pure, sweet spirit of comfort, in the first

weeks of his mother's widowhood, and his first intelligent look and smile, so like her husband's, startled the mother with a strangely sad pleasure.

As the months and years passed on it seemed that his special mission was to comfort his mother. A very sensitive, but happy child, lovely and loving. His active little form was ever dancing about his mother, and his sweet voice constantly repeating, —

"Me love mamma!" "Me do love mamma!"

And again Idnella was holding an idol within her heart, — her little Eddie.

This Sabbath evening Idnella and her children sang a new hymn. The children sang joyously. Little Eddie traced the words with his tiny finger, singing loud and sweet.

There was something in the melody of the little voices, and the words, so uplifting that Idnella felt Heaven and its songs brought very near to her.

Surely, the compassionate Father does at times permit such glimpses to brighten, by memory, some dark coming trial. So this sweet singing with her darlings, and that glimpse of Heaven, was a precious solace to Idnella in after days.

Little Eddie had been like a sun-beam in the home, and a ministering angel of comfort to his sad mother. His mission upon earth was closing.

The Good Shepherd would take the lovely, sensitive lamb away from the cold, bleak hills of the earthly life, into the shelter of the Heavenly Fold.

Very suddenly he was taken with croup, and in a few hours his merry laugh was hushed, his sweet voice stilled, his bright, dark eyes closed in death.

At first the fond mother could not believe that this darling would be taken from her clinging arms. When she fled to her closet to pray that this precious one might be relieved soon, and be restored to health, she found that she could *not offer that* prayer; her lips seemed *closed* against asking for his *life*, and she could *only* ask God that her darling might *not suffer* long. This prayer *was heard* and answered. Little Eddie had been in terrible distress. When Idnella returned from her closet he was quiet, and his large, dark eyes greeted her with one of his loving looks. Idnella was very calm then, for she was leaning upon an Almighty Helper. She knew that her precious child must die, but she did not think he was going so soon. He had suffered so she did not expect he could talk, but to comfort him and relieve her own aching heart she began to talk:—

"Mamma is so sorry little Eddie has suffered

so, but he will not suffer much longer. He is going to see our dear Saviour."

To her surprise the dear child replied, and in his natural tone of voice. O, what a comfort to hear his sweet voice again!

"Talk more about it mamma," he said.

"Yes, my darling Eddie is going to live with our dear Saviour. He will take care of you."

"I want to go now, mamma."

"Oh, my precious child! you will go soon! O, too soon! It will tear mamma's heart to part with you, dear, precious one."

"I want mamma should go, too."

"Mamma will come, sometime, darling."

Looking into his mother's face, he said, in his very earnest way, —

"I want mamma should come now."

Never before had Idnella Grafton gone with her loved ones down to death. Now her Divine Friend helped her to have this quiet, loving talk, and go with her darling down to the dark valley.

A moment after his last word, little Eddie was in that valley, but he started back to find mamma.

He rose up upon one elbow, and reached out his other arm to his mother. She took the little, cold hand within her own, and said, —

"What is it, darling? What can mamma do?"

It was only that he wanted to "find mamma." Then he lay back upon the pillow, and said,—

"Come mamma,—Come mamma,"—until the sweet, faint voice was lost upon the farther shore.

Precious one! he had gone into the blessed life with the Saviour. Idnella knew this was so, but her mother-heart drooped sadly for a time. How could she help it when she missed her little comforter so much, in the stillness and loneliness of her own sick-room, in those after days?

"'T is the work
Of many a dark hour, and many a prayer,
To bring the heart back from a dear one gone.

In a letter to her mother, Idnella wrote,—

"Yes, the cup of sorrow, of which I have drank so deeply, is again pressed to my lips. It is, as ever, a very bitter cup. I have suffered intensely again, for the wounds made by my husband's death are all opened afresh in losing my little Eddie.

"I am comforted with the thought that with his very sensitive and loving nature, it is best for him to be taken to Heaven now, and that he can never suffer again. As I think how he loved music and singing, and that now he is singing in the presence of Jesus, how can I weep for him?

"May I not believe that his father welcomed the little spirit as he tremblingly lost sight of mamma in the dark valley?"

I must believe that loved ones do recognize and welcome each other into that home. Our dear ones are not lost by death, but only gone a little time before us, to that home with God.

Yes, comfort will come to all who trust in God.

There is no evil done to those whom God takes to dwell with Himself. Our selfish love would keep them to walk with us life's toilsome way, but when the eye of faith can follow them into Heaven, and unfolds to us a glimpse of that perfect life with Jesus, then the soul is comforted.

Thus was the mother comforted, until at last she rejoiced in thinking of little Eddie as of one more treasure safe.

What greater blessing could she ask for her darlings, than to be in Heaven, with Jesus?

XXVI.

Esquire Belden.

"Lead Thou me on; there is no Guide beside Thee,
No sure, unfailing beacon but Thine own."
And Thou wilt guide,
For thou hast promised never to forsake."

FOR a time Idnella Grafton bowed beneath her new sorrow, but rose above it with a stronger faith in God. Her step in the path in which He chose to lead her, became more unfaltering, and submissive. Heaven was becoming more home-like, and Mrs. Grafton more and more conscious of the presence of One able and willing to uphold and comfort. In Him she trusted, and to Him she looked for help to train aright the two darling children left to her. When they both gave their young hearts to the Saviour she felt that her cup of joy was full. With new energy her frail arm was nerved up to toil for them, and shield them as long as possible in her own care, and give to them the education they needed.

Years passed away.

Among the few friends of Mrs. Grafton's girl-life, that the changes of years had left in Quince, no one met her with more deference than Lawyer Belden,—the Laren Belden of the olden time. His stylish mansion was not far from the Grafton home, yet he and Idnella met only upon the street in passing. His hat was always lifted, and his hand held out to her in friendly recognition. As her Uncle Dudley's family were all gone, Mr. Belden was the only one left of Idnella's first home in California, and she was not unwilling to meet him in this way.

Perhaps, however, there was more of a cordiality in her own gentle greeting than she was aware of, for Esquire Belden began to question with himself whether he might not, after all, win this woman for his wife.

Esquire Belden married, some years before, a woman of fashion and pleasure. She did not care for love, nor for religion, so she did not trouble him about those things. If he supplied her with sufficient money, that was all she required of her husband. This experience with her as a wife was not calculated to elevate his ideas of women, or of marriage, and he felt little regret when she died.

His business did not absorb his mind; his large,

childless home was a dull place, and there had been more regard for Idnella Heyward in his heart than he had ever been willing to acknowledge to himself.

When Mrs. Grafton returned to Quince, so terribly crushed by grief, Esquire Belden felt his sympathy aroused more than ever in his life before. As he watched her in the after years, struggling up above her sorrow and the difficulties in her path, and with a serene, yet pale face, labor to take care of her children, he felt a strong desire to take care of her himself, but he had no intention of taking her children. No! he was not to be burdened with the children of Edward Grafton. The mother should be his wife sometime, if he could possibly bring it about. As soon as her children were old enough to work, and support themselves, he would help them to situations, and then he would take the mother into his home. It was true that he could not now expect to hear the song and ringing laugh of Idnella Heyward's girlhood, that once charmed him; but he would enjoy having that dignified, quiet, low-voiced woman sitting at his table, and presiding in his home. It would, indeed, be something of a triumph if after all the barriers that had come in the way, he should yet be able to secure her as his own.

These were some of Esquire Belden's cogitations, but he made no attempt for a long time to carry out his intentions. He was waiting till Idnella's children were older.

Two years after little Eddie went to Heaven, and the mother's heart was at rest about him, and she and her Emma and Everett were clinging very closely together, helping each other on in a path that is never an easy one to the widow and fatherless, Esquire Belden made his first call. There was more of embarrassment than was ever seen before in Lawyer Belden, as he met Mrs. Grafton's quiet reception.

Without much preface he made know then object of his call, by asking Idnella if she did not wish to find a good situation for her son?

This question, with all that it implied, came to the mother-heart as an alarm. What, her little son of only eleven years go out to meet the rough perils of business life? She knew this must come to him sometime, but not yet,—no, not yet.

Idnella's thoughts were working rapidly, as Esquire Belden continued:

"A friend of mine wishes a boy in his store. I thought perhaps you would like to secure the place for your Everett. He seems to be a nice boy, and I think my friend will be pleased with him."

Idnella was now prepared to reply.

"Thank you, Esquire Belden, for your kindness, but I have no wish for my son to go into a store now, or any time hereafter."

"What employment, then, do you wish for him?"

"At present only what he is now doing, helping me and making rapid progress in his studies. It is my intention to keep both of my children in school as long as possible, and prepare them for life's noblest work."

"But, Mrs. Grafton, this will be too great a tax upon yourself. Some of your friends feel that you ought to be relieved from this care and toil for your children."

This was something altogether new to Idnella, and it stirred her pure motherhood, giving to her voice a tone of surprise and pathos as she said, —

"Any friend who really has that feeling cannot know much about me. To care for and work for my children is no task to me. I would not be relieved from it if I could. My children are my best earthly comfort and joy. While I can, I most willingly give my time and strength to promote their best interests."

This man of the world, — profound lawyer though he was, — knew not how to meet this

unselfish mother. He had, from early manhood, allowed his mind to become so imbued with materialistic ideas and modern philosophy, that heart-ties, and the best of home-life, were a sealed volume to him. This wonderful mother-love was all a mystery to him, for he had no remembrance of his own mother. Perhaps this was the secret of his predominating spirit of cynicism.

Though Esquire Belden did not understand this woman, he did not mean to give her up. Indeed, her very self-abnegation only increased his determination to secure her for himself.

There appeared now but one way for him, and that to tell her plainly what he wanted. As Esquire Belden had never studied the art of refinement it could not be expected of him now, and so his next proposition came as unlooked-for to Idnella as had the first.

"Well, Mrs. Grafton, my real object in calling upon you is to ask if you will not become my wife?"

The look of startled pain that came into Idnella's face would have deterred most men from urging their request, but Esquire Belden was not to be deterred.

He never was more resolved to obtain his case in some jury court, than he was at this moment to win this woman. He began a rapid recital

of his wealth, his social position, with all the allurements of his elegant home, and all would be her own as his wife.

Ah! what memories of a noble, true love,—a joyous home, of protecting tenderness,—rushed back to the heart of his silent listener!

Could Idnella open her lips to reply to this man? Could she ever lift the veil from the cherished past, and tell him that the memory of her husband's love was more to her than wealth, or any station in life? No! she could not speak of these heart-treasures.

Yet she must make Esquire Belden in some way understand that his request was a hopeless one.

She felt sorry for him, if he really cared for her. "No true woman ever lightly rejects the honest love of a manly heart."

Mrs. Grafton was not sure that this man had any real love for her, but she would not give him unnecessary humiliation in rejecting his offer, so her voice was gently kind as she said,—

"Esquire Belden, I appreciate your offer, yet my only reply is, that I can never become your wife."

He could not believe it possible that this frail woman,—without a home of her own, and with little means,—really meant to refuse his flatter-

ing offer, so again he began to speak of the many attractions of his home, but he was interrupted.

"Esquire Belden do not urge this matter. Nothing will change my mind. I cannot consent to your wishes."

The calm decision of her manner irritated him, arousing the ungentle feelings most natural to him.

"Well, Mrs. Grafton, will you tell me why you reject this chance to obtain a home of your own? Other women would take it without hesitation, I know, and you are not independent of your friends, I am thinking."

This ungentlemanly allusion to her home with Mother Grafton was a keen thrust upon her sensitive nature, but she replied very quietly,—

"I have many friends, and they are all kind, but I do not depend upon any earthly friend. My trust is in God and His promises, and sometime my son will help me to make a home of our own."

"And can you tell me what your God has ever done for you, that you talk of trusting Him? His promises,—what good do they afford you? You seem to have only trouble and poverty.

"And you flatter yourself that your son will

make a home for you, and always be to you the same that he is now. When he comes to manhood and has a wife, you will then find that his mother has little place in his care. That is the way of the world. When that time comes you may regret it if you refuse me now."

While saying this he was watching Idnella, as she sat by the table, with her face hidden within her hands. Some feeling, perhaps of pity, but more likely a determination to gain his own will, caused a change in his voice as he went on, —

"And I will renew my offer to give you a home. Will you not consent to become my wife?"

This unkindness toward herself, and his hard irreverence toward the Heavenly Friend in whom she so trusted, had grieved Idnella into silence. Memories of those happy days, when shielded by her husband's love, came back like heavy waves, and she bowed her face within her concealing hands. It was not in vain that a prayer went from her heart to God, for now she was sufficiently nerved up to meet this hard man.

"Esquire Belden, years ago you asked me the same question you have now. My answer to you then was, 'I can never give my heart nor hand to one who disbelieves in God, and rejects the

Bible.' This, now, with other reasons, compels me to refuse you.

"You ask me to tell you what God has done for me, that I should trust Him? I can assure you that He has given to me, and is still giving, precious blessings in my family. He has taken some of them to His home in Heaven. They are not lost to me.

"God saw that I needed many sorrows to make me willing to find my best joys in Him. He gives to me now precious blessings in Himself,—in a faith that lifts me above the sorrows of my earthly life; a hope that reaches beyond the confines of this world, into His glorious presence in Heaven.

"As to my son, he is a noble boy. I have no fear that he will ever become other than the same loving son to his mother that he is now. Our home will be together while life lasts. I wish for no other."

Esquire Belden had now received a decisive answer, but his baffled will would not permit him to go without leaving a stinging word behind, and in these words the same Laren Belden of former years was fully revealed.

"Well, Madam, trust in your God if you like, but He will not save you from trouble. Cling to your boy too, if you will, and spend your

strength for him, but he will not cling to you when other interests come to fill his mind. I would have taken care of you for life; now I will not ever recognize you again as an acquaintance. You and I must hereafter be entire strangers. Good evening, Madam."

This interview left a sadness upon Idnella Grafton, for it had made her feel keenly her lack of any earthly shielding in her widowed isolation. There were hours of weeping prayer before she regained her usual calm trust in God, and with it she received a renewed uplifting into the Divine presence.

XXVII.

In the Border Land.

"SHE is the sickest patient that I ever had, that lived. She is very near death; only just alive."

For many weeks the physician gave these replies to the anxious friends of Idnella Grafton.

For some years Idnella had been giving herself to promote the good of others. Sometimes in the interest of the church, or to comfort sad ones in their trouble, or ministering to Mother Grafton, and at all times bearing upon her heart the best interest of her children. During the past summer they all went to Pasco. This was Idnella's first visit since her husband's death. Indeed, it was the first time since she left the parsonage home.

As she met those friends, and the associations of her first home with her husband, how vividly the dear old life filled her mind! It was very pleasant to Idnella to meet these friends, and

happy associations, and she returned to Quince much refreshed.

Again she resumed her needle, hoping by rapid sewing to procure home comforts for the winter. Her children entered school with eager ambition to accomplish much in their studies before spring came again. They were loving children, indulging many bright anticipations for the future, when they would take all care of themselves, and of mother.

What a blessing are good children! How tenderly soothing a daughter's ministrations; and the loving care of a son for his mother, is there anything in life more beautiful? In this world of many changes, can man find a love more unchangeable and tender than a mother's?

To Mrs. Grafton was given the blessing of good children, and the winter opened with bright anticipations.

Soon after Everett was taken very ill, and again his mother was called to watch day and night with intense solicitude. For three weeks she did not sleep, but when her son was out of danger, and growing strong again, then the wrought-up tension that had nerved the mother in her loving effort for his life gave way, and she was prostrated.

How very weak she became in a few hours,

and for many weeks she lingered, nigh unto death.

No one told Idnella that her illness was a dangerous one, and that they thought that she must die, but in the strange weakness she felt it must be death. She was too faint to feel or to think, but there came a consciousness that she had now passed through all the wilderness-way of this life. Earth was growing dim, and seemed far away. It was very still down in the borderland, where she was laid, close by the river of death. That river did not seem deep or wide. Heaven seemed only a few steps across, and concealed by a light, misty cloud.

Life appeared to be left behind forever. Even her precious children did not move her heart now to one earthly thought. The tender mother-love was still the same; but its intense, untiring watch-care was closing with her life.

The dear ones gone before; how often as she wept over their graves had she been comforted by the thought, "I shall see them again. They will welcome me as I enter Heaven." This hope had cheered many of her lonely hours, and the Saviour's own words encouraged this hope of meeting in Heaven Christian friends of earth. Not only to see "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," but also to greet again the loved

ones of our own life. Heaven is not merely a meeting-place for friends. To meet Him who is Lord of all, and who only can redeem souls for immortal life; to see His face in joy, and receive His welcome to an everlasting happiness in His presence; this is the true and absorbing attraction of that perfect life in Heaven.

This truth Idnella learned while in that border-land. Her love as a wife and mother was unchanged, but when she felt sure that she was just entering that home in Heaven, she had no thought of the husband and children she loved, and had mourned for so much. No! in the deep stillness of that hour, when her soul lost sight of earth, there was nothing in Heaven that attracted her thought but Jesus, her Saviour-God. So it must ever be with every human soul. He must be first in thought and affection, now and forever. A Friend almighty in all divine attributes, and in perfect human sympathies. In life, and in death, there is safety and peace only in Him.

In Him Idnella was resting. Her entire being was too faint for any deep feeling, but she remembered what a friend the Saviour had been to her throughout her life, and this one thought filled her mind, "I shall soon see Him,—shall soon see Him." A glad joy wrapped her soul,

and lulled her whole being into perfect peace. It was not the design of the Heavenly Refiner to permit Mrs. Grafton to go home then, and slowly she came back to earth and its trials. Her discipline was not all accomplished, and she must walk in the rough paths of the wilderness-life a little longer. There are other crucibles and more polishing awaiting her, and while she will learn new lessons of sorrow, she will learn many new and precious lessons of the wonders of God's sustaining power and love.

It was a long and weary upward climbing, to come back to the earthly life from the low border-land, and Idnella would never be strong again to toil at her needle for her children. They would have to meet life's duties for themselves, and for mother, too. How their willing hands ministered to her, and their loving voices cheered her days of tedious convalescence!

She was still very weak when Mrs. Sherman (Grafton), the only sister of Edward Grafton, came to visit them. Her marriage took place soon after her brother's, and she had lived in New England ever since. Now she came to visit her mother and Idnella. She wished very much to take them all with her to her New England home, but this could not be, and she urged Idnella to allow her daughter Emma to

return with her, saying, "If you will intrust her to me I will give her all the advantages for an education that you wish her to have, and will be a mother to her in loving care."

Could Mrs. Grafton permit her one darling daughter to go far away,—giving her up to the care of another? So she had gone from her own mother years before. Necessity compelled that sacrifice, and did not necessity call for this parting also? She could do nothing more herself to aid her child in securing the much-desired education. Mrs. Sherman could do it all, and should the fond mother shrink too much from the pain of this trial? No! for the best interest of her daughter, she would meet it.

When the last kiss was given, and the parting was over, there rushed through the mother-heart such a yearning, clinging to her child that Idnella sprang up from her couch with the feeling, "I cannot bear this,—I *cannot* have her go away,—she must come back!" But a few moments of mental struggle, and a cry to God for help, made the weak, fainting heart, calm and strong to meet this thought again:—"It is better for my darling to go,—it is so much better for her. I must not grieve so, nor refuse to part with her."

XXVIII.

The Heyward Home.

"Say not 't was all in vain,
The watching, — and the waiting, — and the prayer.
Have faith in God."

EMMA GRAFTON'S home with her aunt was in New England, but a long distance from Weston, and would she be permitted to visit her mother's early home? Mrs. Sherman promised this. The wife of the pastor in Weston was a special friend of Mrs. Sherman's, and she would visit her, and Emma should visit her grandparents at the same time. It was in the pleasant summer time when this plan was carried out.

Mrs. Sherman and Emma went alone from the village to the old homestead upon the hill. The landscape was the same as in the days of Idnella Heyward's girlhood. The same glimpse of river, meadows, farm-homes, and wood-crowned hills, but the Heyward home was neglected and desolate, and no wonder, for its present owner

had been for many years a slave to intemperance. In spite of all restraining influences, George Heyward had gone on in the way to ruin. When his daughter had been a year in California, he surprised his wife by asking, roughly, —

"What is your girl up to, that she does n't come home?"

This was the opportunity his wife had anxiously waited for, to tell him why, hoping much from the effect of this truth upon the father's heart; but the knowledge involved such bitter facts in regard to himself that it only aroused all that was evil in his nature. With a terrible oath he exclaimed, —

"Well, you and your girl need n't think you can conquer me in that way. I will do as I please in my own house. If she has gone off to California, she may stay there. She shall not come here again with her crying nonsense, and you will find that it is best for you, too, to keep your tears out of my sight."

In spite of himself, however, there was always, from this time, a feeling of self-reproach like a biting worm, ever within the heart of George Heyward. He strove to stifle its gnawing, by the constant and excessive use of brandy, but all his efforts were useless. He could not

forget his wronged daughter, nor drown the stings of remorse.

Can any one really believe that a soul leaving the earthly life, unchanged by the mercy and grace of God, will be able, in the other life, to lull the reproaches of conscience? If this is found to be impossible upon earth, with so much to aid forgetfulness, how can one hope to do so in the future of lost souls?

To all about him, George Heyward at last seemed to be only a brutish, insensible man, — lost to every good; but deep within his heart was enshrined a fair young face, and a ringing laugh, and the song of a sweet, young voice, — his only daughter, as she was, before she knew that her father was a drunkard.

Mr. Heyward would not allow himself to look at that memory-enshrined face, nor listen to the echo of that laugh and song. This aroused the undying worm of remorse to a more bitter stinging. By every means in his power he sought to drive from his memory all his family life. To do this more effectually he became rougher than ever towards his gentle wife, even in those rare intervals when he was not so much under the influence of whisky. At all times his hard demands upon the strength of his wife were unceasing. With fearful oaths he

would declare, "You sent that girl off to spite me. Now you shall not rest upon a bed of roses."

Mr. Heyward brought to his home a man with habits like himself, but younger, and not so often intoxicated. Frank Wilbur he made his business agent, having the farm in his care. His most important duty was to furnish brandy and whisky for George Heyward.

Heyward then demanded of his wife a deed of the place.

From the time that Emma Heyward sent Idnella away she had never opposed her husband, nor refused his requests, no matter how unreasonable they were, but she could not yield to this new demand. She sent for a lawyer and witnesses, and in their presence said to her husband, —

"You require of me the whole control of my interest in this, my father's homestead. I cannot, must not do this. I will give to you a certain part of it, — the remainder must still be in my name, according to my father's will; and for the benefit of my own daughter and Edith Ashton."

To this firm decision her husband was obliged to submit. He endeavored, in all possible ways, to be revenged upon the helpless wife. The

interests of the farm were neglected, and its resources wasted. The men gathered about themselves a company of boisterous, drinking men, and many were the revels and midnight carousals in the stately old homestead of Deacon Dudley.

How did the refined Christian wife live in such scenes? Only by clinging very closely to her God and her Bible. One place in the house was closed against all intrusion. Into her bethel-room no foot but her own was allowed to enter. There she wept and prayed when sinking under heavy trials. There she held on to the promises of God, — clinging to them with both hands, — while pleading for her husband, — pleading for her darling, suffering daughter, and for herself. There she was comforted and made strong to endure.

Her letters to friends were full of this trusting faith, "I know that our God is altogether good, and never willingly afflicts or grieves His children, but that they may become partakers of His holiness. He it is who helps me to still pray in faith, believing that my husband will sometime become changed and saved."

It was, indeed, a long and terrible crucible, through these weary years, but Emma Heyward did not waver in her trust in the loving-kind-

ness of the Divine hand that was upholding her in this severe furnace of affliction.

Does not God keep His dear children in some "fiery trial" often for the saving good of others as well as themselves?

The gentle patience with which Emma Heyward had walked alone within her ruined home, and amidst its wild revels, had not been without an influence upon her husband. Though he had fought against yielding one iota of his own will, yet he was being prepared to yield by the silent, hallowed steadfastness of the wife who had so trusted in God, through long years of testing trials.

Mrs. Heyward knew that the child of her darling Idnella was coming to New England, and she expected to see her sometime, but did not know when she would arrive at Weston.

A new burden had been laid upon Mrs. Heyward. As the resources of the farm were now exhausted, Frank Wilbur had gone away, and George Heyward was compelled to obtain his whisky as best he could. In one of these efforts he sprained his ankle, and was confined to his chair, and also obliged to do without stimulants. This made him rave in impatient fury. His patient wife ministered to his comfort, and tried to soothe him, until she could no longer endure

his raving, and then fled to her bethel-chamber. For many hours she knelt in tearful prayer.

Amid all the desolations of her home Emma Heyward had remained a loyal wife, and to her deeply tried daughter she had given a true mother's unfailing sympathy.

She felt her strength exhausted, but she would still hold on to the promise, "Whatsoever ye ask in My name, I will do it." And still she prayed on, pleading with increasing earnestness, that God would come to her husband now, in some way to reach that hard, shut-up heart. "O! my Almighty Saviour, may it not be *now* that my husband shall be brought out of his terrible state? Oh! please bring him to thyself, now!"

A wonderful peace of soul came as an answer to her prayer. She left it all with God. Her step was unusually light, in a new joy, as she left her room and descended the stairs. In the lower hall she found a lady and a young girl, standing by the front door. Her eager eyes saw in the young face, her own child, as she was years ago. She sprang forward with a low cry,—

"Oh! my child! my darling!"

And Emma Grafton was closely folded in the arms of her grandmother Heyward.

Mrs. Sherman had some fears that this unexpected meeting might prove too much for this pale-faced woman. She passed her arm about Mrs. Heyward and Emma, and leading them through an open door, seated them in a near chair.

Mrs. Heyward still held Emma within her arms, — her darling Idnella's own child.

In the long years of bitter trials no one in her own home had given her a word of tenderness or care, and her hungry heart had yearned for one loving word or look. This very image of her own loving daughter was resting upon her bosom, and the same sweet voice, so long unheard, was murmuring in her ear,—

"Dear, dear grandma, mamma told me that I must kiss you very much for her."

XXIX.

Answered Prayer.

Out of darkness, into light.

IDNELLA GRAFTON had made her children so familiar with thoughts of her own mother, that Emma felt that she knew and loved Grandma Heyward at once. Of the father little had been said, and the children only knew that Grandfather Heyward was sick or unfortunate. When they were parting Idnella said to her daughter, "If you see Grandfather Heyward, I want you should ask him if he remembers his little Idnella, and then you must give him a kiss for me."

As Emma was softly laying her mamma's kisses upon the pale, tearful face of her grandmother, she was startled by hearing a rough voice say, "What 's all this, — what 's this sniveling about?" Springing up from her grandmother's arms, Emma turned towards the speaker. She saw it was an old man, sitting in an arm-chair, not far from her. He was a very large man, with

a red, puffy face, and gray, shaggy hair. One foot was laid upon a chair, and wrapped in red flannel. All this Emma saw at a glance. She also saw strange-looking eyes gazing at her from beneath long, bushy eye-brows.

"Can that strange old man be Grandfather Heyward?" she thought.

She turned and whispered, "Is that grandfather?"

Receiving a low "Yes, dear," again she turned and looked at him. His eyes were still fixed upon her with a strange stare.

Emma Grafton was not a timid child, and had little of her mother's peculiar sensitiveness, but she felt a great shrinking from going near to that man. Yet if he was her dear mother's father, she must go to him, and give the message her mother sent to him. With this feeling, Emma went to the side of her grandfather. Resting one hand upon the arm of his chair, and looking into his face, she said,—

"My mamma told me to ask you if you remembered your little Idnella?"

From the moment that George Heyward saw that face, as Emma turned toward him from her grandmother, he had been immovable as though turned to stone. Powerful emotions were being aroused within his long-closed-up heart,

and surging through his long-dazed brain, for the young girl standing before him was the very same as the memory-image so long hidden in his neart; hidden beneath the rubbish of many sinful years, yet still always there. In form and face, the dark, sparkling eye, the fair, round cheek, the smile lurking in every feature, —these were the very same as his only and once idolized daughter.

George Heyward's abused manhood was striving to assert itself, but he was powerless to speak until Emma's message from her mother fell upon his ear, "Do you remember your little Idnella?"

Then the long-suppressed feeling burst forth, "Good heavens! When have I forgotten her? Yes, I have tried to drown her memory in whisky. But I 'll not forget her again,—my little Idnella."

"I will give you a kiss that my mamma, your little Idnella, sent to you."

And Emma Grafton laid her lips to the cheek of her grandfather. This seemed too much. The old man covered his face a moment with his hands, then threw his arms about the child and drew her to himself.

Emma was now alarmed and sprang away to her Aunt Sherman, who was leading her from

the room, when her grandfather cried out in such pleading tones as had never been heard from his lips before, "Don't take the child away! Don't let her leave me again!"

From this hour Emma Grafton was made the instrument, in the hand of God, of leading her grandfather up out of his degradation. At first it was not at all pleasant to her to sit by his side as he wished her to do, but the memory of her dear mother's words, "Be very kind to poor grandfather," helped her to yield to his wishes. When he *gradually* began to ask her about her home in California, and of her dear mother and brother, she was soon talking to him in her own cheerful, animated voice.

It was not long before Emma's happy laugh and song were ringing through the old house. What melody this was, coming back down these years to these weary hearts, the long-exiled daughter's laugh and song again in their home!

To Mrs. Heyward was added the joy of answered prayer. She felt sure that God was giving to her now the fruition of her long waiting upon Him in humble faith.

Her husband was checked in his mad career, and a change for the better was coming over him. The force of long-indulged habits, and the craving for stimulants, were terribly strong, but

he knew that he could not yield at all to them and retain that pure child by his side. When his thirst for whisky was overpowering him, he would call out earnestly, —

"Come, Emma, sing to me again! Sing one of the songs your mother used to sing! — my little Idnella."

Emma Grafton had been two months in the old home. Mrs. Sherman was still in the village, lingering until the grandparents should be willing to spare Emma; but to both of them her presence in the home was like the sweetest days in June, when they are full of bird-song, the perfume of flowers, and the warm, glad sunshine.

One day, as Emma finished the song her grandfather had asked her to sing, she said to him, "Now may I sing to you a hymn that my mamma sings?"

"Oh! yes, you may sing to me anything you wish."

Then the sweet voice sang, close to his ear, all the words of her mother's favorite hymn, —

"What a friend we have in Jesus!"

Mr. Heyward listened in silence to words that for many years he had allowed no one to speak in his presence. For some weeks, as the effects of stimulants were thrown from his brain,

thought and conscience had been busy. The hard, sceptical heart was troubled by the Holy Spirit, and was yielding to the influences that would lead him to eternal life.

As he heard Emma sing this hymn, a view of his own wasted life came before him in a new light; his terrible rebellion against all Divine things; his cruel wrongs to the wife and daughter he had really loved, and all the misery he had brought upon himself and family. For a time he sat with his head bowed upon his hands, then rising up, laid his hand upon Emma's head, saying, —

"Thank you, dear child, for your hymn," and left the room.

For many years Mr. Heyward had not only been indifferent to his wife, but cruel in his treatment toward her. Now he went to find her, with a feeling of his need of her, and with a new appreciation of her rare worth. He was groping in the darkness, — a soul aroused to the truth of his danger, and was stretching out his hands to her for help.

He found her in the summer-parlor, asleep upon the sofa. He sat quietly down and looked at her. In the long years of his mad dissipation he never cared to note how that face was changing. Now he could see the lines of suf-

fering that his own hand had made in that pure, white face. How he had loved that face, once! How cruel he had been! How patiently she had borne it all! What a wonderful peace rested upon that brow, where the blue veins made a delicate tracery over the marble-like temples! Yes, a halo of peace, and of purity, surrounded his wife. For himself there could be only regrets, self-reproach, and coming despair. A groan burst from his lips, which aroused his wife. She started up, exclaiming, —

"Why, Mr. Heyward, what is the matter?"

"Don't be alarmed, Emma. There, lie down again and rest you."

And his trembling hand passed gently over her head.

It was so many, many years since he had called her Emma, or given to her one token of love. This must be a dream of her young wifehood! But, no! there her husband sat by her, looking at her in kindness, but there were tears upon his cheek. Then in broken words he told her of his distress for his wrongs to his family, for his sins against God, and asked her to pray for him.

What a wondering joy! Would she pray? Ah! with what abounding thanksgiving did Emma Heyward go to God, as for the first time

she knelt in prayer by the side of her husband. For a few moments she could only say, "Oh! my Father, I thank Thee! My Almighty Saviour, I thank Thee for this!"

Then there was an earnest, tender pleading that her husband might now be enfolded in the forgiving mercy and love of the one Saviour. The sin-stained soul of George Heyward soon found peace in the only way of salvation. The husband and wife were united in Christ, and made one, as they had never been before in all their wedded life.

Together they returned to their granddaughter, who was writing to her mother. Mrs. Heyward bent over and whispered to her, "Write to your precious mother that a great joy has come to us, — grandfather has become a Christian. As soon as she is strong enough for the journey, we will have her come home."

The mother could not be content without writing herself to her darling, long-suffering child, and her letter was full to overflowing with loving cheer, and the hope that now they would soon meet again. In her deep gratitude to God for His great blessing, there was in this letter a note of triumphant joy, not unlike that of the redeemed ones in Heaven: "Unto Him who has been my own Saviour-God, sustaining me

through so many years of great trials, and now has given to me the blessings I asked of Him, I give all praise, and honor, and songs of rejoicing, now and ever more."

What joyful tidings to Idnella Grafton! How gladly would she hasten to join that now happy circle in her father's home; but she was still unable to endure the journey.

In the spring they hoped all would come to New England,—Mother Grafton to find a home with her daughter, and Idnella and her children would be at home in her father's house. They still waited for the re-union that had been the hope of many years.

Letters passed between the repenting, restored father and his daughter, that re-united the broken tendrils of love.

George Heyward felt his entire inability to control the fearful habits of his whole manhood, and in deep humility was trusting alone in God to help him.

Weeks went by in such happiness as only hearts at peace with God can know; but one morning they found Mrs. Heyward with the thin hands folded upon the quiet breast, a smile upon the sweet face, and the pure spirit fled to God.

It startles one to think of dying so, but death

is only the *shadow* of the *vestibule* that opens the way into the future life. The trusting child of God need not fear to have that shadow fall upon the earthly path at any time.

A great sorrow had come to those left behind, and what a mystery that the wife was taken when her husband needed her so much in his new life! There are no mistakes, we are sure, in the providences of God, though they often appear so to human knowledge.

Mr. Heyward was compelled to go to God alone for help, and to a close study of His Word.

Upon the table in her bethel-room lay the worn Bible that had been the constant companion of his wife for so many suffering years. Upon many of its pages were pencil-marks against some precious promise, or some especial word of comfort, showing how Emma Heyward had learned to "live by faith."

Together George Heyward and his granddaughter read the same words, and the sad old man and the young girl followed the upward leading, as they traced the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

The soul of George Heyward will be saved through trusting in the only Saviour, but it will be as a dim jewel in the crown of Christ's

rejoicing. Who would choose to spend this life in sin, and at the very last be saved through God's mercy, but only as a dim star among the host of Heaven? Better some sharp polishing, and a life spent for God, that will bring the soul nearer to Him in the better life.

Emma Grafton could not leave her grandfather alone, and Mrs. Sherman arranged that she should remain while he needed her, but it was only for a few months, and then he lay upon his dying bed. He was conscious and peaceful.

"I have been a great sinner," he said, "but I am trusting an Almighty Saviour. I shall be among those who are saved by the blood of the Lamb, — Christ Jesus.

"Now, my dear little comforter, sing to me once more, your mother's hymn, —

"'What a friend we have in Jesus!'

"Dear child, thank you. Now take this kiss to your precious mother, my little Idnella. We will all meet again."

And soon another grave was made out in the quiet cedar-grove.

XXX.

Again in the Border Land

"Suffer I grief or loss,
It is Thy will!
He who can ne'er forsake,
Holds my hand still."

TIME hurried the years away, and still Mrs. Grafton remained in the Quince home, with her husband's mother.

These years were quiet, uneventful ones, and Idnella regained much of her lost strength. She was hopefully waiting the unfolding of the future, in a new home with her son, when a sudden illness laid her, weak and helpless, upon her bed. Then came a midnight alarm of fire, and before help could come the flames were bursting into her room and roaring over her head. Strong arms bore her hastily to the house of a neighbor, but from the couch where they laid her she could see the fire destroying the old homestead, so full of memories of husband and children. The dear home with mother Graf-

ton, that had been such a refuge in her widowed sorrow! All was consumed: every memento of her own precious family.

A terrible shock was given to her nervous system, and she lay in unconscious prostration. She was brought close down to the river of death.

Mother Grafton wept over the dear face that was again white and still upon the pillow. Their mutual sorrows had bound Edward Grafton's mother and widowed wife very closely to each other. The mother clung to this daughter, but was too broken in health to remain in Quince. A friend was waiting to accompany her to New England, and she was obliged to leave. She knelt close by the pillow of Idnella and prayed as only suffering love can pray. Earnestly she pleaded that the Divine Saviour, our "Elder Brother," would uphold, and comfort, and restore this precious one, if it could be His will.

The tender petition and loving sympathy penetrated into the deadened brain and heart of Idnella, giving her a little stir of life and comfort; then slowly, very slowly, she was brought back to conscious life again.

Mother Grafton was gone, and all Idnella's surroundings were new. Even the woman who

gave her some care, and the physician, were both strangers to her. Where was she? Why did no friend come to her bedside? Not even her kind pastor and her good old doctor. It was a mystery to her, and troubled her weak mind.

Ah, indeed, it was a mystery why Idnella must be hurried from her burning home into the mansion of Esquire Belden. To him it was a most unwelcome fact. He had never forgiven, he never would forgive, Idnella Grafton for refusing his offer of marriage. This had so rankled in his mind, that no feeling of pity was left in his heart toward her. There was nothing in the teachings of his pet philosophy, excluding as it did a belief in the Bible and in God, that could help him to the noblest and best feelings of manhood. Certainly there was nothing in his present mode of life to awaken sympathy in the sufferings of others. His family consisted of himself and a woman whom he had influenced to discard the Bible and its teachings. When he learned from this woman that Mrs. Grafton had been brought into his house, he demanded of her friends that she should be instantly removed.

The physician who had her in charge refused to allow this to be done. "She is in a dying condition now, — she shall not be removed."

But Esquire Belden still raved. At last the friends appealed to his pride, and to his grasping love of money, promising to pay him for all the trouble.

He finally said, "She may stay, but I will not have people coming here. My woman may take care of her, but you must keep all others away. I will not have folks with their pious cant about my house. I won't have your doctor, either. None but my own shall come here."

To this the friends of Mrs. Grafton were compelled to submit, and she was left in the care of the housekeeper and the new doctor.

At first Idnella was indifferent to everything, but as she began to realize her surroundings, was it strange that she grieved over her entire isolation from friends?

"Why had they all forsaken her?" she questioned in her mind, but did not ask the strange nurse, and never complained of any neglect.

No one could willingly be unkind, as they looked at her white face lying so helpless upon the pillow, but Mrs. Walter was wholly in the power of Esquire Belden, and his order was, "Do nothing that the doctor does not oblige you to do. Her bothering friends are not coming here to know. Let her stay alone day and night,—it's no matter."

Friends had not forgotten, nor her Saviour's promise failed, — "I will never leave thee, nor forsake."

Earthly friends remembered her in loving sympathy, and afterwards she realized how constantly the Omnipresent Friend was near to help and comfort her.

Even while she yearned to see friends, and vainly tried to recall the precious promises, and tears were stealing down her cheeks, there came the whispered thought, "*Jesus knows!*" and she was soothed to quiet rest.

If critics deride this as a fallacy, in like manner may the blind deride our glowing descriptions of sunshine and the loveliness of a summer-landscape. To the open vision, one is as real as the other.

A hundred miles from Quince, Mrs. Grafton's son was engaged in business, and preparing a new home for his mother. He was informed of the fire, but not of his mother's illness. Receiving no reply to his letters after some weeks, he hastened to Quince.

How like the glad sunshine was his coming to his mother's lonely sick-room! Her noble, manly son, with his pleasant voice and smile.

"Oh, mother! Dear mother! Why did they not tell me how it was with you? I would

have come at once. I ought to have come before."

No one could keep the son away from his mother's bedside. Esquire Belden refused, and Mrs. Walter frowned, in vain. Everett firmly maintained his right to remain by his mother during the day, and at night near her in the adjoining room, giving her cordials and soothing her wakefulness as she needed.

There were no more lonely, grieving hours for Idnella. Her loving son was her watchful nurse. He would not allow anything to worry or tire his mother. He talked or read a little while, and then would say, "Now, dear mother, you must rest," and his hand went gently over the tired head, or soothingly over the nervous hands, until quiet sleep came.

The physician said, "Sir, you are doing your mother more good than I am."

During these weeks, Esquire Belden was an irritated, unhappy man. He knew that people called him ungentlemanly in his treatment of Mrs. Grafton, but he would yield in nothing. He had hoped that Idnella would die. His talkative housekeeper kept him well informed in regard to the sick-room. When he heard how quietly patient she was in her strange isolation, and of the smile with which she received un-

wonted attentions, he could not help some memories being stirred, of her joyous laugh and song in her uncle's home.

"He would not care," yet he found he could not help caring, and thinking, as the weeks went on. This increased his irritation. The thought would come,—

"What if there should be some truth in this idea of a Supreme Power? What if, after all the vaunted wisdom of this trusted philosophy, it should prove to be deep, dark, mental blindness, and all its followers be led into eternal night?"

For many years Esquire Belden had filled his mind with the thoughts of leading sceptics, and of the Bible and the laws of God had been willingly ignorant. Yet there was within himself, as in all humanity, a law that God implanted, that was calling him to an account. He had every means to gratify earthly desires; then why was he so unhappy, so unsatisfied, while Idnella Grafton, sick, homeless, and with little means, was quiet and peaceful? He could but remember that she was a sensitive and timid girl, and in the years since, she had again and again been crushed by heavy sorrow, but had risen above it, calm and strong. What had sustained her?

She had said to his housekeeper in those days before her son came, "I have a friend in my Saviour, who never leaves me."

Could any one live through years of constant sorrow, and become strong by a delusion? This did not accord with his mental philosophy. Morbid fancies and unhealthy brain-illusions were short-lived, or ended in a fog of mental ruin!

Mrs. Grafton had been more deeply afflicted than any person that he knew, and was too weak to grasp a thought, or hold on to any belief, yet evidently was resting upon something not seen by mortal vision.

As these thoughts came to Esquire Belden, and he remembered how calmly Idnella had walked in her sorrowful path, toiling for her children, trusting only in God, and in new trials and great weakness trusted Him still, he was compelled to admit that there were some mysteries that neither science nor philosophy could solve.

There were Heavenly influences about him then! Would he yield and live forever? Or go his own way, and meet the second death?

"There is an unseen battle-field
In every human breast,
Where two opposing forces meet;
The end—is Life or Death!"

XXXI.

Mother and Son.

"Home, sweet, sweet home."

MRS. GRAFTON came back very slowly to health. At times she seemed to be sinking. Then she would say, —

"Oh! let me go to my Saviour! I want to rest in His presence forever! My darling son, don't try to keep me here any longer!"

"My dear mother, I must try to keep you! I cannot spare you! I need your prayers and your love! Don't you remember that you are to keep house for me in Benton? Do try to live, for my sake, and I will take such care of you that you shall not become tired or sad again!"

The pleading love of her only son was a strong incentive to bring the weak spirit back to life. It was God's will that she should live, and His hand lifted her up again.

After a few months, mother and son were settled in their new home in Benton.

It was a pleasant cottage-home upon the outskirts of the city. There was a charming view of the broad river near by, and in the far distance could be seen the snowy peaks of the Sierra Nevada. Within and without, flowers, and climbing plants, and vines, beautified the home.

Through all her life Mrs. Grafton had retained her peculiar love for home. Since the terrible breaking up at Quince, this love seemed intensified.

Her affections had been loosened from one fond clinging after another, until it seemed that she would never dare to rest in anything of earth again; but she certainly did rest in this home with her son. Everett Grafton had always been a gentle, loving child, and was a tender and considerate son in his manhood. In this shielding love Idnella rested as she had never done before since her husband's death, and she did everything in her power to make home bright for Everett. It was her highest earthly pleasure to prepare every comfort to welcome his return from business.

Everett Grafton was an active member of the church in Benton, and was found only in the paths of truth and right. He was in the strength of young manhood, and when his mother became strong enough to attend church, with what a

fond pride did she go, leaning upon the arm of her son!

"No mother has a better son than mine," was her constant, loving thought. When Everett's musical voice united with her own in the singing and family prayer, the fond mother-heart was content. Earth could give no greater joy, no better love; and while they lived, this home and this shielding love would be hers.

If we were writing a fiction, we would now close our story, and leave Idnella sheltered in the loving care of her son; but we are giving glimpses in real life, of real sufferings, in a real crucible!

XXXII.

A New Crucible.

"Lord, chisel, chasten, polish us,
Each blemish take away!"

"Though strength should falter, and though heart should bleed!"

—*A. A. Proctor.*

FROM boyhood up to manhood, Everett Grafton had trusted his mother; giving to her that confidence which is youth's best safeguard, and often man's best comfort.

When Everett chose his wife, he sought his mother's consent and blessing, and the mother gave both, with an earnest prayer that this new event might prove indeed a blessing to her son and to herself. Her own daughter now belonged to another. In the wife of her son she hoped to gain a loving daughter. She knew little of the lady of his choice, but in her heart she had given her a welcome and beginning of a mother's love. She loved her son too well not to love his wife also, and with pleasant anticipations, the home was made ready to receive the new daughter.

It is well that the future is unfolded one page at a time to human hearts!

As the mother received her son and his bride, she detected at once some trouble in the frank eye of her boy, and a quiver of his lip as he gave his kiss of greeting.

She could not question him as in the past, for one stood closer to his heart than mother; but she knew that her own place was the same that it had ever been, and if he was in trouble he would be sure to come with it to her sometime.

Everett Grafton was in an unexpected, bitter, strange trouble!

Everett was like his mother, loving, sensitive, and gentle in all his intercourse with others, and possessed the aspirations of a true manhood. His love for his mother was true and tender, and he felt the force of these Bible words, — "The only son of his mother, and she a widow." To care for mother, was to Everett a part of his being, and interwoven with all his plans in life. When he won Minnie Andrews for his wife, he felt sure that he had secured a kind daughter for his mother.

How great was his astonishment and trouble when his chosen wife began to say to him,—

"I don't mean to have any mother about me; your mother must go away from our home!"

It was impossible for Everett Grafton to believe that his wife could be in earnest, or if she had this feeling, that it could be retained. He only replied,—

"You will change your mind about that when you are in our home, and learn to know my mother."

With this hope he took his wife to Benton. How joyfully he had anticipated presenting this new daughter to his mother! How happy they would be all together!

Already a fear or doubt about this had come to Everett, which caused his lips to tremble, as he met his mother's welcome.

This mother whom he loved so much! Who had suffered in so many ways, and he had intended to shield her from any more trouble! Was his marriage to bring new suffering to her loving heart? It could not be! He would not believe it!

XXXIII.

The New Crucible.

"Thou Great Refiner! Sit Thou by!
'T is sweet to think how well He knows
The silver's power to bear
The ordeal through which it goes,
And that with skill and care,
He 'll take it from the fire, when fit,
With His own hand to polish it!"

NOTWITHSTANDING the modern idea that woman has the "right" of leadership equal to man, there still remains the Bible-teaching, that "the husband is the head of the wife." It was ordained that the wife should stand beside her husband, his equal in all that is best in life, and his superior in that which makes of a true woman a queen in her home; but man was ordained of God to be the rightful head and guide. When this is understood, and married life rests upon God's teachings, there is no clashing of interest, or disunion in family life.

Everett Grafton found, to his disappointment and sorrow, that his young wife did not accept

the Bible as her teacher and guide. He thought that she was so good and true, and that she loved him; but she would not yield to her husband's wishes about his mother. She was determined to have her own will! Everett pleaded with her.

"My mother's rightful home is with me, her only son. I never could have dreamed that you would wish or compel her to go away. I thought you liked my mother."

"I like her well enough, as well as I would like any mother in my home. But I don't want any, and I am determined not to have any. I have no fault to find with your mother, but I don't want her here."

"Do you love me, Minnie?"

"Well, I should think my being willing to marry you, might answer that question."

"But it seems you do not love me enough to allow me to keep my mother in her home."

"Well, I will have my own way about that! I will have it so! Your mother must go away, somewhere. You must tell her to go away, or *I* will go away! You will have to choose between us!"

Was there ever a young husband in such a crucible before!

Why, O why, must it be so?

This question always comes with new and startling force, as some "fiery furnace" withers fondly laid plans of earthly joy!

One evening down by the river in the Catalpa grove, with only the stars for company, Everett Grafton questioned with himself and battled with his sorrow.

"Why has this come to me? I love my wife; I love my mother. I must have both with me. I have tried to please God. Now, where I expected so much happiness, a great trial has come! I thought Minnie was good, kind, and loved me. Now she utterly refuses to permit my mother to remain in the home with us! My precious mother, my much-suffering, widowed mother! I am impatient of my manhood, that I have so failed to protect her. Can I ever tell her what my wife demands? Oh, no! She must never know. But how can I shield her from this knowledge? Oh! God is dealing very hardly with me!"

Ah! dear heart, do not give up your faith in the loving-kindness of God. He surely never grieves nor gives pain to any one without sufficient cause. If He disappoints in earthly joys, it is only to lead the aching heart more surely to Himself, the only Fountain of all joy.

Everett Grafton would be made to see, through

this crucible of sorrow, that there was no true union in marriage with one who was not a Christian. A child of God, with one who is not! God does not bless such marriages. He was not blessing Everett. This was his mistake; and in this was the element of his hard trial.

Everett did not tell his mother, but she learned of the sacrifice her new-made daughter demanded. The knowledge came to her as a new shock.

She "must go away somewhere," and give up her home with her darling son.

How the words burned into her heart, and hissed in her brain, through the long hours of that night! Like a terrified child fleeing to its home from danger, Idnella Grafton fled to God in prayer. The Divine Comforter came with His never-failing help. In the morning she was calm, serene, and gentle in manner.

With this feeling strong in her heart, — "This must come right; I will try to be to Minnie the same as though she was the kind daughter I expected to have in the wife of my son," — Mrs. Grafton went about the usual household cares, ministering as a mother to the comfort of Everett and his wife.

Constantly asking God to help her to do just right in her new duties, and bear her new sorrow in silent patience, she made no complaint.

She did not speak of this trouble to her son or his wife. She said nothing about it to any one but God. It was such a strange, humiliating sorrow, that her son's wife refused to live with her! What did it mean, that she should have this laid upon her, after all of her devoted mother-life! She could talk about it only to her Saviour-God!

No effort of the will, nor submissiveness of spirit to God, can compel the healthy action of the human body in such heart-suffering as this. Idnella was soon upon a sick-bed, with a low fever. The weary brain grew hot and confused, under the torturing weight of this strange sorrow!

Idnella had made some true friends in Benton; and as these friends watched by her pillow, they caught the half-articulated moanings of the grieving heart. "Oh! Everett, my precious son, I cannot go from you! You will not allow your mother to be turned out of this home, — your home and mine! Why, this is my home, I have no other! I cannot be separated from you, my son, my only, my darling son! Why is Minnie doing this? I would have loved her, if she had allowed me to; but what shall I do now? Where shall I go? My Father, O my Father in heaven! My Saviour! Where is He? All gone! all gone!"

Would this oft-suffering brain be wholly overpowered now? Oh, no! for again the Great Physician gives His healing mandate. He cooled the fevered brain, and soothed the sad heart, until Idnella was her conscious self again. Her son was by her, with his own loving way, and she thought that this trouble was only a sad dream of the night.

After a time, Mrs. Grafton was again about the house, though pale and weak. She was resting in the loving care of her son, but it was not permitted long, for Minnie had not relinquished the design she deliberately formed, to compel her husband's mother to leave the house.

The marriage that was anticipated by Everett and his mother as an event of joy, had only brought sorrow to them both. But solemn obligations devolved upon him as a husband. These he could not lightly throw off. He was continually saying to his mother, "You must not go away, you must remain in spite of everything."

Mrs. Grafton could not live in contention, and she believed that no one should ever come between husband and wife; not even a mother, though a mother should always retain her own place in the heart of her son. Idnella was compelled to see that increasing trouble was made for Everett, while she remained, and she deter-

mined to leave, in the hope that the home would be made happier for him.

From the time that she learned of this new trial, she had gone to God in pleading prayer for direction. She was without one earthly friend to advise her. She shrank from telling any one of this strange trial. She could only go to God. He directed and gave her strength.

"What shall I do? Where shall I go?" had been the burden of her prayer. She thought of Weston and her childhood's home. No father or mother could welcome her now; no dear one of the old home. It would not be home. No spot upon earth would ever be home to her again; but the old place would be a refuge, and she decided to return.

Mrs. Grafton had not complained, nor blamed any one; but the constant struggle with this grief in her mother-heart was written upon her white face. She was very quiet, too, still, as in the time after her husband's death. Her sufferings were very keen. She was giving up the last one of her own precious family, and her last earthly dependence!

She tried to close her heart against the full meaning of this "leaving her one darling son, and giving up her one only home!" She dared not stop to think what it all involved, lest her

grief should again overpower her mind. She dared not stop to look at the shrubs and flowers her own hand had cultivated, nor give a parting glance at the pleasant rooms she had beautified for her son and his wife, but rapidly and silently she made her preparations to depart.

One evening she and her son stood alone at the depot, waiting for the night-express.

Everett was very pale. Indeed there was such a look of intense suffering upon his face, that his mother was lifted above her own bitter grief, that she might comfort her darling and help him through this parting.

"Oh! my precious son! You and I must now live very near to our Saviour; He only can help us; He will help us; He will keep us in all of our earthly life, and in His Heavenly mansions we will meet again! No separation, no sorrow, no sin will be there! O, cling very closely to our Saviour, my darling, precious son!"

Her self-control was failing, tears were falling fast, she could say no more. There was one more moment of clinging to her son, and then Mrs. Grafton was alone in the sleeping-car. Alone, though surrounded by strangers!

With her face pressed against the window, she yielded to the bitter weeping that would no longer be controlled.

Tears are the safety-valve for heart and brain, and many hours passed while this wronged, forsaken, desolate mother wept. The wind swept by, dashing the rain against the window, as the cars rushed on in the thick darkness. Idnella felt that she was whirling through the darkness of a new and terrible experience in life. Every foundation seemed swept away from beneath her feet. Husband, children, home, friends, all were taken from her!

When tears had had their way, and the low sobbing ceased, Idnella could listen to the whisperings of the Divine Comforter, as He reminded her of the truths she knew so well.

"God, your Heavenly Father and Saviour, is left to you! He will never leave nor forsake you!" Again her bruised heart was quieted.

> "In this bitter anguish lying,
> Only Thou wilt hear my crying."

So will "I comfort you," as when a sobbing child seeks sweet heart-comfort on its mother's breast.

XXXIV.

Robert Fenton.

"When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'Tis said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.

"So, to the heart that knows Thy love, O Christ,
There is a temple, sacred evermore;
And all the babble of life's angry voices,
Dies in hushed stillness at its peaceful door.

"Far, far away, the roar of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully,
And no rude storm, how fierce so e'er it flieth,
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in Thee."

—*H. B. Stowe.*

ARRANGEMENTS had been made for Mrs. Grafton to stop a few days in San Francisco, with Mrs. Mason. This lady had previously lived in Benton. She had seen how happy Mrs. Grafton was in the home with her son, and had known of the sorrow that had so strangely come to them. She met Idnella at the station, and welcomed her to her own home with pitying kindness.

People who have never suffered, often feel it a wearisome task to meet others in great sorrow. Ah! if they could only know that a gentle, unvarying kindness, even though silent, is always a solace to a suffering heart!

Mrs. Mason was somewhat perplexed. The sad, white-faced mother! What could she say to her, or do for her, in these few days before she would go on to New England?

The best thing that Mrs. Mason could think of was to take Mrs. Grafton to one of Mr. Fenton's evening services. "He is a wonderful man. He always has the right word for each of his hearers. I know he will say something to comfort you. Mrs. Grafton, you must hear Mr. Fenton."

Mr. Fenton!

That name meant nothing to Idnella, for she had never heard of her mother's early friend.

This was indeed Robert Fenton. When we last knew him he was in a maze of bewildering disappointment, grief, and doubt. To his dazed mind the affairs of this life seemed to be without the minute inspection of the Just and Wise Controller. He believed in Him as the kind and Infinite One, but He seemed far off. Soon after Robert's last interview with Emma Dudley,

he went to Europe with Doctor and Mrs. Harland. They were gone two years.

Doctor Harland and Robert Fenton chose to spend their time in leisurely rambles through the rural scenes of England; then a long, long time in wildly-romantic Scotland; and many months they were hidden among the valleys and mountains of Switzerland. Such scenes in nature have a wonderfully soothing and recuperative power on over-taxed brains, and nerves, and bruised hearts.

Doctor Harland became almost young again, in the elasticity of his spirits and mental strength. To Robert Fenton there came an uplifting and expanding of physical and mental power, such as he had never before experienced. There came, also, an uplifting and expanding of his soul-life beyond anything that he had ever known. Gradually his heart was comforted and made quiet, as his soul was led out of the darkness of doubt into the light of a true trust in God. He found perfect rest of soul in a perfect Saviour. Amid the clamor of this earthly life, some even of God's children fail to find this entire rest, but it is for all who will receive it, and there must be the beginning in this life, for "the *openings* of the streets of the New Jerusalem begin upon earth."

Robert Fenton was to enter upon a special work for his fellow-men, and God was giving to him a special preparation. First, a great sorrow that sundered his strong earthly love; then special consolations that lifted his whole being into the near and abiding presence of God.

This presence healed the bruised heart, and gave rest to the soul. This permitted Robert to enjoy more keenly all that was finest in nature. The grandeur of the mountains, the splendor of the sunsets, the lovely-tinted flowers, were to him constant reminders of the power and kindness of their Creator. In such a Being he could trust, and to His service he would willingly devote his whole life. It was amid those Alpine solitudes that Robert Fenton consecrated himself entirely to God, and found this soul-rest in Christ.

One afternoon when Doctor Harland and Robert were alone in a lovely valley of the lower Alps, while above and beyond arose the snowy peaks of the higher Alps, the sun in the midst of gorgeous clouds was sinking towards the crest of the mountain, tinging the landscape with gold and crimson rays, Robert Fenton's voice was heard in hushed tones repeating those grand words of the Psalmist:—

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, *so* the Lord is round about His people."

And then,—

"O men whose spirits are wounded,
And crushed 'neath earthly cares;
O women, whose hearts are bleeding,
Whose griefs no mortal shares,—
Go to the mount of communion."

Robert was nerving himself, and preparing Doctor Harland, for an unwelcome communication. Presently he spoke again,—

"These grand old mountains, how they help us to realize something of the power and majesty of God! How they help to lift us up nearer to the unseen glory! What are we but motes in the vast, unlimited universe of God? And yet He stoops to listen to our petitions, and cares for us in all of our needs. The belief that He does know and care has become a source of continual strength and rest to me. He is well acquainted with all that you have been to me, and your plans and hopes in regard to my remaining with you as your medical assistant. He knows how happy I would be to comply with your wishes, and yet He marks out another path for me, and one that must lead me away from you and away from New England."

While Robert was talking, Doctor Harland had

been intently listening. At these last words he started from his seat, grasped Robert's hand, and exclaimed, —

"Why, my boy, what can you mean? You are to be my assistant physician, — yes, my sure helper. I am depending upon it in all my future duties as a physician. You cannot, you must not, desert me."

"Oh, no, my truest earthly friend, I shall not desert you; I will be your loyal son always. But listen while I explain to you my position. I cannot fail to understand that God is calling me to a different work. That call came first in my last year at Yale. I would not give heed to it. I was too anxious to remain with you. I was too much absorbed in my dreams of earthly happiness, to be willing to listen to the whispered call of my Heavenly Friend.

"Within a few months, and since we came into Switzerland, this call has come again, loud and distinct. I must listen and obey. My work is to be especially among young men, and my first field of labor is to be in Chicago."

"But, Robert, you surely must know that you can do this work as well, if not better, as a physician."

"It is indeed very true that a physician has many opportunities; but as a doctor with a gen-

eral practice, I could avail myself of such opportunities for this special work as might come to me only at intervals. Now I shall devote all my time and strength to the work of *elevating* a higher standard of physical, moral, and spiritual life among the young men of our country. I am alarmed and aroused, as I see so many of them drifting, drifting continually away from all that is noble and best in manhood. Ah, and some who profess better things, do not live any better. They, too, are drifting with the thoughtless crowd, away from God and hope. Oh, why do men so willingly grovel in the mire of sin? I am ashamed of humanity when I hear some men talk; but, oh, they do not see. It shall be my life-work to help them to see and understand God's truth. I am but one, yet I go, leaning for strength and wisdom upon Him who has all power. This work is His own, and He will give success to it.

"Now, my dear, ever-kind friend, will you not give me your hand as a pledge of your sympathy and aid, as I go to this work?"

It was difficult for the good old doctor to do this at once. How could he, in a moment, relinquish the cherished hope of years? He would have remonstrated and reasoned the case over again, but when he looked closely into Robert's

face and saw there the inspiration of a noble resolve and a holy consecration, he felt sure that it must be yielded to, as from the Lord. Soon he said, —

"Robert, you do not intend to shut yourself away from a family life, do you? You must not allow your own life to be a desolate one, because Emma Dudley was false. You love home so much, you will marry sometime?"

"I cannot say. I do not know. I have no intention about it, either way, now. Marriage is of God's appointment, and is too sacred to be treated in the ignoble manner in which many receive it. But while it is ordained of God, yet I believe that if circumstances require it, men can live without home or family. God gives the grace sufficient for all times and needs. Whether with or without a family of his own, it certainly is man's imperative obligation to keep his life pure in God's sight. This is the life I shall strive to obtain, even the life hidden in Christ Jesus, my unfailing Friend. With this I know that my earthly life will be full of the best joys.

"Dear friend, do not have any fears for my future, nor any regrets for yourself. To both of us, in our now deviating paths, will always remain the Divine upholding Presence. If this is

not so, what is the meaning of His often-repeated promise, 'My presence shall go with thee'? Let us trust Him fully."

The sun had disappeared over the snowy crest of the mountain, but in the prolonged twilight of those clear-air heights the two men descended the winding path without any difficulty, the older man leaning upon the arm of the younger.

Ah, how confidently Doctor Harland had expected to have that strong young arm and noble heart to lean upon in the coming years! One more of earth's dreams vanishing from Doctor Harland's life!

XXXV.

Robert Fenton,—Continued.

"Ye looked on one, a well-wrought stone,
A saint of God matured;
What chiselings that heart had felt!—
What chastening strokes endured!
Perchance the hammer's heavy stroke
O'erthrew some idol fond;
Perchance the chisel rent in twain
Some precious, tender bond."

SOON after this they all returned to America. Robert Fenton did not make a long stop in Weston. Emma Dudley had married George Heyward, and was in his home. Robert would not allow unhappy memories to disturb him, but he was eager to be about his work, and soon left for Chicago.

His appointed work was especially among young men; he sought to win their confidence by his pure example, and lead them by earnest endeavors and entreaties into the true life in Christ Jesus.

Robert Fenton understood what dangers beset the paths of young men, and he knew that

there was no safe, true happiness in this life, and no hope for the future, except in Christ. Living very near to the Saviour, Robert was continually aided in winning others to trust in Him.

Indeed, as the years went on, Robert Fenton seemed to hold on to God with one hand, while with his other hand he reached down into the depths of human sin and misery, and from those depths souls were raised up, and washed in the atoning blood of the crucified Redeemer, who will rejoice in the presence of God forever.

After a few years of labor in Chicago, a band of noble young men were raised up, who became willing helpers to Robert.

A company of these young men went with him to San Francisco. There, among the strangely varied elements that made up the community, Robert Fenton gave himself to the same work as in Chicago. A church was formed, and expanded as the years passed by.

In San Francisco, Robert met a lady who was gentle, refined, and like himself working for the Master. He had long felt the need of a home. The best natures feel this need the most. So Robert won Miss Eldon for his wife, and with her he had a quiet, happy home.

His labors were greatly blessed; many pointed

to him as the one who led them to their Saviour. Mr. Fenton loved his work, and never grew weary in it, for his own soul rested serenely in the abiding presence of his Divine Lord.

Robert Fenton's life had in no way been a failure. He was now an old man, but still the beloved pastor of the church that he gathered in the early days of his labors in San Francisco. He had an assistant in his pastoral duties, and but one evening in the week conducted the services himself. It was to this service that Mrs. Grafton accompanied Mrs. Mason.

The church-edifice was not an elegant one in its exterior, but was spacious and pleasant within. This was a week-day gathering, but many people had assembled. The two ministers were seated upon the platform. The younger one opened the meeting, conducting the preliminary exercises.

When the elder pastor arose to speak, a profound hush fell over the congregation. There was an eager leaning forward, a lighting-up of eyes that expressed great love for the pastor, and a confidence that what he had to say would do them good.

He was an old man, yet there was no indication of spent powers, either in his manner or

his language. He had the appearance of having given himself to a life of earnest activity; and yet some resource had kept his whole being in a healthy vigor. It is true that his once dark hair was snow-white now, but his broad forehead and dark eyes were the same as in his youth, and those who knew the aged pastor then, would recognize the same smile with which Robert Fenton always greeted his friends.

Mr. Fenton's remarks were a comment upon some passages in Isaiah. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely he hath borne our sorrows and carried our griefs."

"This is a sad but true picture of the atoning sufferings of man's Redeemer. Perhaps we have so often heard about those sufferings, that they have ceased to affect us; but let us now look again, and closer into the meaning of this picture. There is not another like it in all the universe of God. Is it not worthy, then, of our most earnest attention?

"Who is this wonderful bearer of the sins and sorrows of earth?

"He is 'the brightness of the Father's glory,' and the 'express image of His person.' He is 'God manifest in the flesh,' 'the Prince of peace.'

In Him are united the Divine and human natures. Through this human nature He takes upon Himself the sins and sorrows of all who will trust in Him. For us 'He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' All through the ages, since He returned to His throne in Heaven from His mediatorial sufferings upon earth, He has been saying to every soul, 'Come unto me; I will give you rest.'

"Oh! how can any soul reject such a Saviour, such a Friend? Most surely He is the only unfailing Friend that we can ever find!

"Those who trust in Him are not without bitter sorrow often; and you ask, 'How does He bear our griefs, and give us rest?' It is not by taking away the pains, or the feeling of sorrow, but He gives to us His own abiding presence, so that we rest in His love and unfailing care. His own humanity was undefiled by any taint of sin, perfectly pure and holy. Yet He knows what keen sufferings a human soul is capable of enduring, in its struggles with sin and sorrow. He comes to our help through His own fellowship of suffering. Ah! He does more than that, for He takes our aching, bleeding hearts, and holds them close upon His own, till the anguish is removed.

"He is the great Refiner and Purifier of our

souls, but when He places us in the crucible He remains with us, He feels with us in the smarting pain of the furnace, He holds us that we may not sink, fainting, in the refining process. Not all of God's dear children understand about this; not every one is chosen in the fiery furnace, but those whose hearts have been bruised and crucified as to earthly joys, know, after a time, how wonderfully sweet is the privilege of laying all things upon Jesus, and resting in Him.

"Are there not some here to-night who are in great need of Him? Dear hearts! You may often have been to Him in trouble, and never in vain; but now some crushing sorrow bewilders you, so that you do not discern His presence. But surely He is near to you. With a tenderness beyond even that of a mother, He will bear your griefs and carry your sorrows. Only trust Him! There certainly is a sweet rest for the soul in this trust. Try it, dear friends! Try it, and you will find that it is true!"

It would be impossible to describe in words, the earnest, tender pathos with which Mr. Fenton dwelt upon his theme,—a living, ever-present Saviour as a Friend sufficient for the needs of every human soul.

There was nothing especially new to Idnella in these thoughts; but they came as precious

reminders of the Saviour's help in times past, and would He forsake her now?

She was still thinking of this, when she heard the voice of the old pastor talking to the people about her. It was his custom to go among his congregation after the service closed, speaking a word to each one, and no stranger ever left his church without a kindly notice. As he took the hand of Mrs. Grafton in greeting, he looked into her face with an eager questioning, for though her name was unknown to him, yet her face was that of a familiar friend.

"Where have I met this Mrs. Grafton before?" he thought.

"From New England? And from Weston, did you say, Mrs. Grafton? And your father's name was Heyward?"

Ah! that explained it.

What an electric chain of associations flashed before his mental vision, as Mr. Fenton looked into the pale face before him, tracing there so strong a resemblance to the two faces he had loved so truly,—his mother's and Emma Dudley's! What vivid memories of the fiery crucible of his young manhood!

Yet no sadness mingled in the retrospect; for all regret had long since vanished. Not that the pure love which blessed his early life was for-

gotten or lost, but the conflict and pain were over.

Those who give to God their entire confidence, find that He takes from their souls not only the guilt of sin, but the pain of memory. The ministrations of the Divine Friend are the only "waters of Lethe." While they do not cast all memories into oblivion, yet they do remove all pain from memory.

Only those who have received the life that is hidden in Christ, are thus blest. No one is refused who will accept this Divine Redeemer. A tested friendship is a trusted friendship!

Long years of close walk and loving service had brought Robert Fenton into a soul-knowledge of God as his Friend. He knew He was perfect in all His attributes and ways. A perfect trust in a perfect God! This is the life hidden in Christ!

Only those who indeed receive this new and hidden life, can be fully trusted to meet safely every demand of this earthly life. As Idnella looked up into the face of this pure-eyed, grand old man, she felt sure that he could be trusted as a friend, and she was not disappointed.

XXXVI.

Alone, yet Not Alone.

. . . . . "It is thy heart:
It must be crushed by pain and smart,
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art,
Ere it will yield a fragrance sweet,
Ere it will shine a jewel meet
To lay before 'Thy dear Lord's feet.'"

MRS. GRAFTON had completed all of her arrangements, and was just upon the eve of going on to New England, when a very unexpected obstacle rose before her. Some one, direct from New England, and from Weston, reported the news as a fact, that the old Dudley homestead was altogether in the possession of strangers.

This was true only in part. It was true that Mrs. Heyward had secured to Idnella and Edith her own right in the estate. Idnella had so understood it; but these tidings made her feel that she had no right in her old home. This had been the only refuge that she could claim, and with this closed, she could not go on. Her one

darling daughter was somewhere in New England, and the hope of meeting her had been the only bright spot in the mother's future; but this, too, must be given up!

With her broken health, and in her time of sorrow, there appeared no refuge in all the wide world for Idnella Grafton.

When every earthly home was closed against her, mind and body seemed again sinking in the fierce conflict.

Where can the bruised, sinking heart go, but to the Bible and to God? His precious promises are still there, and His revealed will; but what was His will for her? And why had He laid all this terrible sorrow upon her? There must be a wherefore. Was it not now her first duty to trust Him fully, and show to all that she did not question His love? If the Lord takes away something earthly from us, He certainly means to give the soul something heavenly. When one of the Lord's children is left without the protection of an earthly home, the meaning is that God would have that soul find its only home in Himself!

The necessity was laid upon Mrs. Grafton to decide these pressing questions,—

"What can I do? Into what path must I go in this wilderness-life?"

Only her Father in Heaven could direct; she looked to Him in pleading prayer. At the same time she wrote to some old friends, asking their aid in finding a position where her own hands could labor and support herself. No such place opened for her.

Some of her friends wrote in reply,—

"Why, Mrs. Grafton, you are not strong enough to work. Where is your son?"

Others wrote and asked her,—

"Why have you left your home with your son? You ought to return to him and let him support you."

Could she tell those friends why she was obliged to leave her son? She could not; and earthly sympathy was now failing her. But she was to receive a deeper knowledge of the unfailing sympathy and power of her Divine Friend. Her mother-heart was being crucified in its purest earthly love, and her only Helper was the crucified Saviour!

Mrs. Grafton rented a room of her friend, Mrs. Mason, gathered a few things about her, and began a home for herself. She had not told her son why she remained at Mrs. Mason's; but in her letters tried to encourage him to meet his own trials, assuring him that she would need his loving letters very often to cheer her lone-

liness, and he must do whatever he could to aid her. She braced herself up to meet her new life! With her Bible, and in prayer, she hoped to be sustained in this, as she had been in former trials.

Alone,—in a new home,—among strangers, and with no earthly arm to depend upon! This was the reality that became more and more a tangible fact. She was as sensitive and as loving as in her girlhood and wifehood. She had learned to love and trust in God; but could she live without any earthly love and trusting? Could she be made satisfied to cling only to God, her unseen Friend?

As she lived alone day after day, all the memories of the past rolled back like surging waves. All the happiness, so precious even in retrospection, and the sorrows that were so crushing! The last great sorrow now overshadowed all others! Not only widowed, but shut away from her children!

Why? O, why?

Did God intend this to be so? Was it His will?

She had a rightful home, and a good son, but was compelled to give up both, in such a needless way. Ah! there was such a bitter sting in this thought,—"There was no need of this trouble!"

And the mother wept in unreconciled grief.

Few, even of loving mothers, ever cling so fondly to their children, as did Idnella Grafton, and not many ever suffer as she suffered. No one but God knew just what her son Everett had been to her. Her loving boy always, her kind protector in later years. She had trusted him, leaning in such serene confidence upon his young manhood. Often she had felt and said,—

"Do you not see how kind and good he is? Not many mothers have such a son as I have!"

Now he had deserted her in this needless, pitiless way! Yes, he was compelled to leave his mother to meet life's hardships alone! How can the mother-heart help its weeping?

Is there any wrong in a sorrow like this? Is the love between mother and child as unsubstantial as the mist upon the mountain, that winds sweep in a moment away?

Is any true love ever lost? Does the purest of all earthly love, that of a mother, ever become annihilated amidst the clashings of earth's selfish interests?

Again Mrs. Grafton sank under her new and strange trial. Many hours of the day and night were spent in bitter weeping, or in prayer. Her prayers were not answered by a peace of soul,

for this suffering heart was still an unsubmissive one. Its constant feeling was,—

"Oh! my darling son! My only one! I cannot be shut away from you in this unnecessary way!" Again and again, the waves of grief swept over her, as she remembered how altogether needless seemed this trouble!

Constantly before her mind rose the unanswered,—

Why?

Alone! all alone! Must she accept this position for life? Her heart was being crucified, and seemed slowly bleeding to death! Her mind, that had breasted so much upon the sea of life, was among the surf-waves, which threatened to overthrow completely her reason; but as one amidst dark waters, struggles to grasp anything that will aid and save, so now Mrs. Grafton tried to grasp and hold on to some promise of God.

Idnella knew not what to think. Was she, after all of her experience of God's loving kindness, to doubt Him now, and complain of His providence? Was not His hand in this trouble also? Was He not wisely good, though He had permitted her steps to be turned into this lonely path of suffering?

She still believed in the kindness of God; she

did love and trust Him. In times of sorrow we must go to Him. No one could know this better than she; and she would not be turned away, but clinging to her Bible, tried to find some word of promise to clasp, as for life!

But a cloud had come between her soul and God!

This bleeding of her mother-heart had made her spiritual vision dim. Hope and faith seemed gone. The feeling rushed through her soul that she was forsaken of God! Heaven as well as earth had deserted her!

A wild whirl was upon her brain! Would the sorrows of this long and deeply-tried heart result in insanity?

No! O, no! The tender, pitiful Refiner still upheld her! His presence, though unfelt, still sustained her in this crucible!

Idnella had never yet given up all to God. Her intensely loving nature clung with a strong hold upon her son! This was the conflict between her soul and God, to yield an implicit submission to Him, an entire giving up of her whole being, to do and to suffer His will.

Why was this not done at once by Idnella, who had learned through so many lessons, that God could be fully trusted?

He who is Infinite Love, knew her struggles,

and laid no feeling of condemnation upon her heart in all her bitter sufferings! But when she walked her room rapidly and long, to keep the agony of her grieving within control, He gave to her some promise of His own, to quiet and strengthen her; but as this unreconciled conflict continued, He permitted this cloud to wrap about her whole being, the feeling that He too had forsaken her! Then there was no ray of light in her soul, no promise given to comfort her. This was more than she could bear! To be shut away from her Saviour would be the climax of all woes!

With a terrified fear that her reason was leaving her, and at last giving up all to Him, once more she knelt in prayer. With earnest pleading she cried,—

"Oh! my Father, my Saviour-God, do not leave me! Do not forsake thy weak, distracted child! Help me, O, help me for the sake of Jesus!"

Some words of the Saviour she had often read, came now to her memory, with a new and living reality, to her suffering heart.

"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you."

"Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it."

"All power is given unto Me, in Heaven and in earth."

Now the prayer of Idnella's submissive heart was,—

"I would be wholly Thine! Help me to be willing to do and to suffer all of Thy holy will! Let Thy will be done with me, and with my precious children! I yield them up into Thy care! I give up all of earth. Only give to me Thine abiding presence!"

A new and wonderful peace, which only God could give, filled the soul that just before was so dark. Again, came those words like sweetest music, "Be of good cheer,—it is I,—be not afraid." And—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake."

Again the Great Physician applied His soothing balm to the bruised heart.

The Good Shepherd brought his panting, weary one, into the "Green Pastures" and "Beside the still waters" of His abiding presence.

Now He gave to her all His "exceeding great and precious promises."

With a restful joy never felt before, Idnella trusted in those promises! They became to her conscious faith more valuable, more to be desired,—yes, far beyond conception, more precious,—than all of earth. Mrs. Grafton must still meet her lonely life, widowed, homeless, and away from her children; but she found rest,—

soul-rest and heart-rest,—in this Divine promise: "My presence shall go with thee; and I will give thee rest."

Beneath the shadow of this Abiding Presence, Idnella sits in quiet content within her lonely home. Sustained by that Presence, she is borne over the troubled waters of many earthly cares, toward the opening harbor of Heaven.

Something of its pure, sweet air, its holy atmosphere, its perfect rest, seems at times to be wafted to her soul from the farther shore. Her joy and hope all center now in her ever-present Saviour-God. She is now not only willing, but eager, to trust Him to direct all her steps, and arrange all things for her.

Had she attained to a life of perfection?

O no, not in herself; that is a blessing held in reserve and laid up in Heaven! She had only learned the precious lesson of *resting* by *faith* in a *perfect Saviour*, and seeking to do His will in loving submission. If left to herself a moment, she would again sink into unsubmissive grieving, and desponding fears.

In herself she is without any merit: without righteousness, without holiness; but in and through a perfect Saviour, she may claim it all. It is all in him! There is, there can be, no perfection in humanity, only in Christ Jesus.

To all who will abide in Him, He gives His own promised "Peace" and "Rest."

The rest, by faith in Jesus. This blessing is waiting for all who will accept of His own invitation, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

XXXVII.

Old Friends.

"All the needful, sweet corrections
Of this gentle hand of Thine,
All Thy wise and careful nurture,
All Thy faultless discipline:
All to purge the precious metal
Till it will reflect Thy face:
All to shape and polish jewels,
Thine own diadem to grace."

—*A. C.*

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., 18—.

MISS EDITH ASHTON:

Never-forgotten, Dear Friend.

"After another period of silent years, I am permitted to write to you again. This opportunity is to me most unexpected, and most gratifying. Can you think how pleased I am to speak again to such a friend as you were to me in my young manhood? Truly, my best friend.

"Allow me to say a word about myself before I speak of other matters.

"After I wrote to you from Fort Oakland, I went with some of our soldiers to the upper Pacific coast.

They were guarding the frontier, and we remained in that vicinity for many years.

"I was still the army-surgeon and a self-appointed chaplain. My efforts for the best good of the men were blest of God. I would be content to live and die in this work; but my health has become now inadequate to meet the duties of an army-surgeon. My advisers assure me that it is best for me to leave the climate of the Pacific coast.

"Intending to go on soon to New England, I made a stop a few weeks since in San Francisco, to see an old friend who is a physician there. Soon after my arrival, Doctor Minturn began to speak of one of his new patients, in whom he felt much interest. He said, —

"'I knew when I first saw her that she had lived through almost everything! Since then, I have learned, through others, that this is very true. She has had severe trials in the past; and is now meeting some great sorrow. She has a very nervous temperament, with delicate sensibilities; and, of course, with ardent affection for friends and home. She is alone, — among strangers, — is now in frail health, and meeting some heavy sorrow. Yet she is calmly quiet; too quiet, under all of her circumstances, for normal, human nature. She did not ask for medical advice; a lady who had become interested for her sent for me. I wish you would call with me and see what you think of her. If there is any brain apathy, she is in a danger I must meet at once.'

"I went with him to see his patient. He took me to the third floor of a tenement-house, into a small chamber. I saw at a glance how plain, yet refined, were all the furnishings of the room. As we entered I saw a lady sitting in an easy rocker by the open window, watching the clouds or the tossing waves of the Pacific. In her face was a far-away look, but it was a peaceful one.

"She turned fully towards me, as Doctor Minturn introduced me to 'Mrs. Grafton.' I then recognized a school-mate of my boyhood,—your cousin, Idnella Heyward. The recognition was mutual, and the meeting most unexpected to both of us. With a low cry, Mrs. Grafton exclaimed,—

"'Oh, Howard Fielding!' and clasped my hand within both her own. She was perfectly still, as she struggled to control her emotions; but she became so pale that the doctor was anxious, and I hastened to explain to him that Mrs. Grafton and myself were school-children together in New England. Old associations were revived in seeing me, but I thought they would not injure his patient. So it proved. After the first excitement was over, Doctor Minturn could see that it was indeed a quieting tonic for Mrs. Grafton to meet memories of her far-away girlhood, and of her home in Weston.

"Doctor Minturn also soon understood that I could solve the mystery why Mrs. Grafton was enduring her trials so quietly. He had no personal knowledge of the Christian's hope in Christ. Of course its wonder-

ful sustaining power was a mystery to him. Sometimes he had said, 'If these things are true, why don't people live them out better?'

"In Mrs. Grafton he saw the words of our Saviour exemplified: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me — peace!'

"Doctor Minturn no longer doubted the reality of this, as he watched his patient meeting her rough, lonely life. Willing to die, or willing to live, — just as God thought best! The Doctor was convinced that there was no apathy of the brain, in her calm submission. Her brain was, indeed, too active; but kept under control through her trust in God.

"You will remember how very sensitive your cousin used to be; she is the same now, but she has learned to take everything to God in prayer. One day she said to me: —

"'Our Father in Heaven has taken from me, one after another, everything of earth that my heart could rest in; but He gives to me now all things in Himself! I have had precious joys in precious friends; but there are no joys like those I now find in Jesus. No friend like him, — what a friend He is! So perfect in all His attributes! The one God, — yet our Redeemer, our Almighty Friend! He is so loving, and forgiving, and patiently forbearing with us, in our sins and weakness.

"'I have been made willing to live alone without earthly friends; but I cannot live without my Saviour-God.

"'Doctor Fielding, have you learned to know Him as your abiding, ever-present Friend? One with us in our lonely path; a Friend willing to listen any moment, as we go to Him in our daily needs; a strong Helper, and a sure Refuge. Oh! it is an ineffable privilege to trust all things to His care; to lay down a tired, aching heart close beneath the shadow of His presence!'

"Surely your cousin has been taught of God how to find rest by faith in Jesus.

"At intervals Mrs. Grafton has given me the outlines of her sad life. As I listened, I could but wonder as Doctor Minturn did, how she lived through them; but she reveals the secret while she is telling the story: God kept her!

"Her trials in leaving Benton she cannot talk about. Once she began to tell me something of her home in Benton, and her son; but at once her lips began to tremble, and all she could say was this: 'My precious, noble boy; he never meant to have his mother wronged.'

"At times I have led Mrs. Grafton's thoughts back to the old school-house in Weston, and then Edith has been with us again. How happy we all were in those days! How cloudless those after-years of our own opening future, when we anticipated that our united path would be one of flowers and sunshine. Instead of that, came our crucible of sorrow, and rough, lonely years.

"When I think of you and your cousin Idnella,

two most delicate, loving hearts, shrinking from even an unkind look, and remember what trials came to you both, the questioning springs up again and again: 'Why? Ah, why?'

"And the answer ever is, 'To bring the soul nearer to the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through suffering.'

"Ah, yes! and so there is in Him a fellowship of suffering with all whom He places in the 'Fiery Furnace,' and through this He prepares them for some special service for Himself.

"If you and I have been among that chosen number, is it not well? Yes; and now and evermore our glad evangel must be, 'Our Father in Heaven doeth all things well.'

"And now I am prepared to write you some news that will make you sing for joy. Your cousin Idnella decides to go on to Weston. You know that this was her intention when she left Benton, and before she knew that you had returned from India. You know why she remained in San Francisco. We have not thought that she would live long, and surely never be strong enough to go to New England; but she seems much better. You know that Mrs. Grafton's only daughter is in New England; the anticipation of sometime meeting this daughter comforted the mother when she left her son. Now she says, 'Oh, if I can only see my darling daughter once more!'

"Mrs. Grafton is evidently stronger; but I think that the hope of meeting again her Emma and you

is nerving her up to undertake this journey. She will not go alone. You have heard of a wonderful minister in San Francisco, — I am happy to have met him here. He certainly is one of the most noble of men, — a rare, Christian man. His very presence is a benediction to all who meet him.

"Did you ever know that he was once an especial friend of your Aunt Emma? He and his wife have been very kind to Mrs. Grafton; she has been in their home some time. They intend to go with her to Weston. Will you write to them soon, telling them if they can expect a welcome with Idnella?

"And now, dear friend, may I say some things for myself? Soon after I met Mrs. Grafton, she told me that you had returned from India to the old home in Weston.

"Ah! what memories of you and of that home sprang to life and hope, from the buried past. Buried? Yes; but not forgotten. As I could not cherish a hope of meeting you again in this life, I would not allow memory to dwell upon the past, and laid it tenderly away.

"You are again in Weston, your health injured through your labors in India. Now, with a strong desire, I wish to hasten to meet you in Weston, and be permitted to take care of you, as I once so surely expected to do.

"I am no longer young; but the love I gave to you in my youth still lives, as truly as in those far-off years when our marriage seemed so sure and so

near; only the love has become purified and exalted. Would there not be a rare happiness in our union now, after all of these years of change and suffering?

"My dear friend, — my Edith, once, — are you willing to welcome Howard Fielding again? He went from you, in his proud wilfulness, to meet the hard discipline needed to bring him into a better life. He loved you then; but not with the pure tenderness with which he would now return to you.

"Do not hesitate to grant my request from any considerations about your state of health; only allow me to take care of you the remainder of our life upon earth.

"Will you tell me, if, when you welcome your cousin and her friends, you will give the same welcome, as in the olden time, to

HOWARD FIELDING?"

XXXVIII.

At Eventide.

"Thither we hasten through these regions dim;
But, lo! the white wings of the seraphim
Shine in the sunset."

AGAIN it is a summer evening in June. The air is full of bird-song and the perfume of flowers. There will be one of our most beautiful sunsets; for many lovely-tinted clouds cluster about the sun, as he lingers low in the West. The outlook from beneath those old poplars is the same as in those far-off years, when cousin Idnella and I sat here together, talking of our young life-dreams.

Ah! how like a dream is all of this earthly life! The true awakening will come in the future life. Is this a dream, or something true, that my cousin Idnella is now on her way to New England?

Indeed it must be true, for a note from her own hand now lies before me; and she says,—

"Dear Edith, my hope is strong that I shall see you again. I think this hope of seeing you and my darling daughter nerved me up to leave California. Mr. Fenton and his wife have been to me the kindest of friends. I owe all of my present comforts to them.

"We stop at this place a few days for needed rest, so I send this little note to you. We will all be with you by the tenth of June."

And now it is the tenth of June. To-night I am waiting to welcome my darling, long-tried Idnella back to her childhood-home. How my heart bounds at the prospect! And then to meet Mr. Fenton, my Aunt Heyward's noble friend, and his wife.

They must be even now very near Weston! But there is another friend with them, whose coming I anticipate in a strange expectancy,—my affianced husband again,—Howard Fielding!

Could I have refused to send the word to Howard that would bring him to me now; or failed to give to him the welcome he asked of me? Oh, no! for the love has remained the same,—only shut away in my heart through all of these years.

Howard Fielding and myself are no longer

young in years; but what does that matter, when the heart remains young?

Those to whom God comes the nearest, through great sorrows and testing trials,—such hearts never become old. The purest love that God gives to man and woman for each other, has a perennial youth!

Amid the splendor of this June sunset, and with long-ago memories thronging back upon me, I am waiting with a restored eagerness to give Howard Fielding the same welcome as in the olden time.

What a home-coming this will be to all of us! Since my return from India,—three years ago,—my own life has been a secluded, lonely one.

Cousin Idnella, after so many sad years, returns to her life's first home. Associations and memory might overwhelm her now, if she were not so securely hidden within the "Rock of Ages." She is feeble in health, but we hope to hold her with us a long time yet. She would gladly welcome the "Opening of the Mystic Gate" that will admit her into the immediate presence of Him who has been her only unfailing Friend!

Mr. Fenton returns to the scenes of his young life as a noble, old veteran from a victorious war. With unfaltering ardor and undiminished

vigor, he labored on far into old age. Then the summons came suddenly to him to lay aside his armor, for his soldier-work was done.

Amid the regretful tears of his devoted people, he resigned his pastoral charge, and immediately left San Francisco with his wife and Mrs. Grafton.

Robert Fenton can truly say, in the words of St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I am now ready, and the time of my departure is at hand." To one like Mr. Fenton, death can have no terrors! A loving soul going to meet its unfailing Friend,—to a home of endless joy and rest.

Mr. Fenton has lived very near that Unseen World and his Saviour for many years. The keen disappointment and "Fiery Crucible" of his youth and early manhood, in a little time accomplished the refining that might have taken long years. In his living by faith upon God, success in his work has been the record of his life.

Now, for a time, we shall all remain together in this old home. We are all like soldiers returned from many a hard conflict; or like pilgrims after long journeyings over many rough mountain-paths.

People about us looked on at our trials and

varied discipline, and called us unfortunate, and pitied us; but the meaning and the result of God's dealings with His children are always hidden from the knowledge of the world, — even as His tender, sustaining love is unknown to the thoughtless world.

Even Christians do not always understand the whole meaning of God's dispensations with them, and they too often impatiently ask, "Why must it be so with us?"

Yes, we have all been long in the refining crucible. Bright dreams faded, sweet flowers by our way-side, and fond hopes that we cherished, withered too soon for our hearts' content. Precious joys of earth vanished too soon from our sight.

This wrought no harm to any of us, for Heaven gave to us its treasured hopes in exchange. We have all learned in truth, that the Refiner, who sits watching the crucible of our lives, is a Being of such infinite tenderness, that He never adds one needless pang to the refining process.

Our Father and Saviour, our gentle, faithful, soul-purifier, how truly have we learned to trust Him, to love Him, to rest in Him, even while in the testing crucible! He has again and again always proved Himself to be the *only* Unfailing Friend.

We are now fully convinced that in His love and kindness He keeps our souls in His crucible only until the dross of sin is wholly consumed. When that process is completed, and our purified souls reflect His own image, then are they prepared as jewels for the crown of His redeeming love.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."—*1 John, 3 : 2.*

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